



The 461st

Liberaider



Vol. 11, No. 1

June 1994

SOMEWHERE IN THE USA



**TO HONOR THOSE WHO GAVE THEIR LIVES FOR FREEDOM
AT NORMANDY AND ELSEWHERE AROUND OUR TROUBLED
WORLD OVER THE LAST FIFTY YEARS**

FREEDOM IS NOT FREE—IT'S PRICELESS

I watched the flag pass by one day,
It fluttered in the breeze.
A young airman saluted it,
And then he stood at ease.

I looked at him in uniform,
So young, so tall, so proud;
With hair cut square and eyes alert,
He's stand out in any crowd.

I thought of how many men like him
Had fallen through the years.
How many died on foreign soil?
How many mothers' tears?

How many pilots' planes show down?
How many died at sea?
How many foxholes were soldiers' graves?
No freedom is not free.

I heard the sound of taps one night,
When everything was still.
I listened to the bugler play,
And felt a sudden chill.

I wondered just how many times
That taps had meant "AMEN."
When a flag had covered a coffin
Of a brother or a friend.

I thought of all the children,
Of the mothers and the wives,
Of fathers, sons, and husbands,
With interrupted lives.

I thought about a graveyard,
In some forgotten place,
Or of unmarked graves in Arlington,
No, Freedom is not Free.

The 461st LIBERAIDER
461st Bombardment Group (H)
Activated: 1 July 1943
Inactivated: 27 August 1945
Incorporated: 25 November 1985

461st Bomb Group (H) 1943-1945

Balance Sheet for 1993

CORPORATE HDQRS: 1407 W. 4th St. P.O. Box 5160, Spencer, IA 51301

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"Liberaider"

George D. Dickie—Editor—PO Box 615, East Sandwich, MA 02537
The "Liberaider" is published twice a year on behalf of the members of the organization. Permission is granted to use articles provided source is given.

FROM YOUR EDITOR

This message is being repeated for the benefit of the men just returning to active duty. You older members pay attention! You're still not doing it right.

President, Frank O'Bannon: Frank responds to questions relating to Group policies and operation and lost members. He plans the reunions with the help of MariMac Corp.

Vice-President, Ed Chan: Ed is our top "tracer of lost persons." If you want to locate a lost crewmember, talk to Ed.

Treasurer, Pete Peterson: Pete gets all the money. All dues should be paid to Pete. He also maintains the official address list. Send all changes of address to him.

Editor, George Dickie: I accept nothing but articles for the "Liberaider" and comments on what a good job I'm doing. Don't send me complaints (We don't have a chaplain), dues or address changes. It just costs more for me to send them to Pete.

General Checking Account Balance 1-1-93		\$1,602.00
Receipts From Dues Paid	\$17,248.18	
Interest Earned on Checking Account	219.28	
Receipt from PX	2,014.25	19,481.71
Total Receipts		21,083.77

EXPENSES

Office Supplies	\$1,843.35	
Frank O'Bannon Petty Cash	4,748.35	
Postage	356.59	
PX	2,929.30	
Ed Chan (Locating Men)	477.70	
Liberaider Publication	933.73	
Reunion Expense	4,819.20	\$16,108.22
General Checking Account Balance 12-31-93		4,975.55
Total Expenses		\$21,083.77

FUNDS TO COMPENSATE DUES FOR LIFE MEMBERS

Vanguard Mutual Fund Value on 12-31-93		\$3,436.53
Annual Return 14%		
Stein Roe Income Fund Value on 12-31-93		3,427.55
Annual Return 13%		
Scudder Income Fund Value on 12-31-93		4,294.99
Annual Return 12%		
Cert of Deposit Frmr's Bank Value 12-31-93		3,480.40
Interest Rate 2.2%		

OTHER FUNDS

CD FRMRS BA 350073 Memorial Fund Value 12-31-93		1,061.94
CD FRMRS BK 33469 Reunion Acct Value 12-31-93		
Interest Rate 2.2%		8,852.34

OTHER CHECKING ACCOUNT

Reunion Checking Account		\$5,081.89
Interest Rate 2.0%		

Gail Peterson
Treasurer

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MAIL CALL

Dear Frank,

I am a member of the 766th Bomb Squadron of the 461st Bomb Group. My name is Joseph Hammer.

I read the December 1993 edition of the "Liber Raider" and was moved to let you know of my experience with the 766th Bomb Squadron.

The article about the B-24 "Exterminator" is what I would like to write about. I will lead up to this as it happened.

We arrived at Hammer Field and Captain Darden and I discussed how to build the 766th Bomb Squadron. He said to me that our time would not be wasted if we only had an airplane to fly and train with. I asked what is wrong with the B-24 behind our Engineering Office. He said that it could not be flown because its engines have too many hours on them. I asked if we could overhaul them. He would check and see about that.

The next day he called me to his office and said he could get four new engines and I could have the ground crew start removing the old engines. The new engines arrived and were installed. I started all four engines and they pre-flight tested O.K.

The flight crew was so eager to fly they took it up and air tested it. The flight report was O.K. Normally I always flew on such tests as an observer.

I will call this plane #30. Later that day another crew took it up to train with. They came back with the two inboard engines feathered because of runaway engines, 3050 rpm.

I ground checked all four engines and found nothing wrong with the rpm of the engines. So I signed it in as O.K.

Later that evening another crew took it up and also came back with it on two engines, reporting runaway #2 and #3 engines.

I then went over to the sub-depot and asked if they

could check the prop governors. They gave me four new ones which I had the men install. I gave the engines a ground run and all checked O.K.

The next morning as I arrived at our Engineering Office I found Colonel Glantzberg and other officers waiting for me. The Colonel asked me what I was doing sending a faulty plane up to fly. I told the Colonel what I had done. He asked if the plane was ready to fly and I said it was.

The Colonel said he would pilot, Sgt. Hawkins, the line chief, would co-pilot and I was to engineer the power settings. So the three of us took it up for a test. The pre-flight was O.K. Take off and wheels up O.K. With full power and prop in low pitch the engines attained 3050 rpm on all four engines. The colonel asked for 2600 rpm. I toggled the prop governors and the rpm came down. We agreed that the rpm was high but controllable.

The colonel made two touch landings and takeoffs with the same results. He decided to go to altitude and see how it acted above 20,000 ft. It tested O.K. On landing I gave the Colonel the flight report book and he signed it O.K.

I asked him for comments about the high rpm on takeoffs. The Colonel said it was the "hottest" plane he ever flew and if any other crews had any complaints they were to see him.

After this episode my plane #30 flew many training flights.

Several weeks after the B-24 #30 episode, Captain Darden called me to his office. He said that there is a B-24 at Bakersfield and we can have it if we correct a problem with it. I asked what the problem was. He said this plane leaked gasoline and the sub-depot there couldn't seem to fix it. Could I fix it? I said I believe I could. So he sent a pilot, co-pilot, myself and ten men to go get it.

The next morning I went to the airfield with my men. We found #674 the B-24 "Exterminator". As we looked it over a sub-depot inspector came to us. He said three tanks had been installed on the left wing side and were all hooked up and he had inspected them. All we had to do was put the other three tanks

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(Continued from page 3)

in and put the wing panel back. We did this. The plane's tanks were filled to half capacity. We waited a while and had no gasoline leaks.

The engines had been pickled for storage. I started one up at a time and burned off the pickling oil. The engines all pre-flight O.K.

The pilot and I decided to fill the planes tanks fully. We now taxied out for takeoff. As the pilot gave the plane its pre-flight, I decided to check the underside of the wing for leakage. To my dismay I found the underside of the wing getting moist from gasoline. I had the pilot cut the engines. We were towed back to the hanger.

By this time Captain Darden was on the phone from Fresno. I told him I knew where the leak was. He asked how long it would take to fix it, my guess was two or three days. He didn't like the sound of this. Si I told him we could come back to Fresno the same day if he wanted to hear of my plan, which was to drain the tanks to half capacity and see if the things dried up (which they did). I told him we didn't need full tanks to get back and could work on the plane at Hammer Field.

Captain Darden called me again and asked if I was sure my plan was safe. I told him I would be on the plane and felt safe. He said that to overrule the Civil Air Authorities he had to sign for such a flight, which he did on my assurance.

We arrived safely at Hammer Field. Being at our home base we took out the tanks we had installed. I climbed into the wing and found a loose filter neck

and that the vent clamps were not tight enough. After putting all tanks back and making all the connections myself the plane was O.K.

This B-24 "Exterminator" flew many training flights. I was not the crew chief on it because I had old #30 as my plane.

The day Captain Darden failed to return from a training flight I learned that some crewmembers that bailed out came back. I found the co-pilot and asked him about the plane. He told me that Captain Darden advised him to instruct all the crew to put on their parachutes. The co-pilot said all the instrument readings were normal. Why were they to get ready to bail out? At this point Captain Darden in a strong order told them to bail out. Captain Darden stayed with the plane. The co-pilot had no more information for me.

The loss of Captain Darden shook me up deeply. I thought to myself, am I the cause of his death because I brought this plane to our Squadron for training. Captain Donovan, who replaced Captain Darden, and Colonel Glantzberg assured me I did no wrong.

This is my personal recollection of the B-24 "Exterminator" history. It is my intention to inform and offer that any of the above accounts may be added to the material already at the Fresno Metropolitan Museum

Sincerely,
Joseph Hammer, 766th B.S.

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Joseph Hammer
1944



Joseph Hammer
1994

(Continued from page 4)

Dear George,

I regard the following mission as being a bit out of the ordinary but after half a century I had remembered what happened that day as incidents in separate events. Then in 1992 our crew's ball gunner, Don Askerman, wrote a fine book "My Forties" which chronicled his reminiscences of WWII. It is based on his letters home plus a diary in which, amongst many other things, he detailed our sorties. It is from his book that I have pulled together this narrative.

I call the mission we flew on Dec. 2nd '44 "The Trials and Tribulations of a Bomber Group", or "If the Nazis don't get you the Gremlins Will". Early that morning when the Squadron wake-up man entered our tent I was wide awake. I had been laying in bed listening to the aircraft engines as the crew chiefs made their pre-flight inspections and the rattle of the pots and pans in the nearby kitchen as breakfast was being prepared. For me an up-coming mission was not conducive to slumber so I had been awakened by the activities of our organization as it began to prepare for the launching of its aircraft. I and my three tent-mates got up, dressed by the light of our kerosene lamp. Stepped out into the pitch black night and checked the sky to discover that the stars were completely obscured. Returning outside after breakfast we could see that the dawn's first light was revealing a solid overcast above our heads. So when we got off our truck and entered the Group briefing room we felt certain that we would not be going. Nevertheless, the briefing began and when the wall map was uncovered it showed that we were to attack the well defined oil refinery at Blechhammer, Germany. Its name alone was enough to send shivers up and down my spine and it was a long ways from Torretta, and because of the distance we would be carrying only six 500 lb. Bombs plus a full load of gas. First, the weather officer gave his spiel by telling us that: the ceiling above us was at 3,500 ft.; these clouds were only 500 ft. thick; it was perfectly clear above the deck; and all of it would dissipate by the time we returned. Our leader then said that we would be climbing up through the clouds and forming on top as would be the other groups. Finally, I was informed that our ship had been designated the Squadron cam-



era plane so again Don Askerman would be taking the target pictures.

Later, while waiting beside our B-24, co-pilot Chuck Prohett and I noted that the clouds were as solid as ever so we were surprised when the green flare was fired above our heads giving us the go-ahead. We entered our ship wondering how several hundred bombers were going to make it through that overcast without some of them running into each other. We waited and waited for the Liberator which we were to follow to the runways. As we were the camera ship we would be the last plane in line for take off so due to the delay I kept my eye on the other bombers. When the last one started down the runway I figured that I had better get going but just then the ship we were waiting for taxied by so I fell in behind. Thus there were only two of us in formation when we climbed to the cloud base and as I didn't relish penetrating the clouds with a plane right next to me I pulled away. I entered the overcast on instruments and found the air to be calm but as we climbed through I felt a slight shudder. I immediately pegged it as the wake of another aircraft and thought to myself, "Ah, someone else has been here." In my training I had learned the feel of flying through a plane's turbulence for in acrobatics a loop was a good one if we flew through our own wake at the bottom. The same was true when practicing a 360° turn on instruments. A bright sun greeted us as we rose above the cloud layer and the other plane was close by, only now it was on the opposite side. Our paths had crossed while in the mist and there was no way of knowing how close we had come.

We were surrounded by groups assembling their formations but none of the ships were near enough to make out their markings. The plane I had been following didn't seem to know which was our Group plus we couldn't see the ground to spot the site over which our bombers were to form, thus I took off for the closest bunch. That was not our formation so I went to another and then another plus another one after that. By the time I got to an unfamiliar group at the very rear, it and all of the other formations had started north to their targets. There was no way I could catch the ones in front so I slipped in as the last plane of this strange group. Now our only questions was, "Where were we going?"

We traveled up the Adriatic Sea, traversed the Istrian Peninsula, crossed the Alps, flew across Austria and then entered Germany. Finally our naviga-

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tor, Bob Rathfon, said it looked as if we were going to bomb Blechhammer after all and he was proved right when a thick field of bursting flak greeted us over the target. Upon sighting the first bombs falling from the lead ship bombardier Frank Gaudio toggled ours and when all had been released our unknown commander put the formation into a turn. He included many ziggs and zaggs which made for a successful rally that kept us out of the flak. In the mean time Don took a number of photos of our missiles exploding on the target. Our flight out of enemy territory was uneventful so over Yugoslavia I left the formation, set a course to Torretta and throttled back our engines to minimize gas consumption. After a bit engineer Bill Kassay came up and said that he was going to transfer fuel to even up the four tank system. He returned to the rear of the flight deck and had just begun his task when all of a sudden we were startled by all four engines quitting. The resulting silence was deafening. The only sound that could be heard was the wind swishing by.

I lowered the nose and put the ship into a glide but I must admit that I was dumbfounded. In training we had practiced flying with one and two engines out, discussed what to do with three out but we never even considered all of them going out at once. Lee Emanuel had often complained that in his top turret he couldn't see the interior of the plane so he would never know if we were in trouble and he might remain there after everyone else had bailed out. This time upon hearing the engines quit he exited his turret, snapped on his parachute, hit the bomb bay catwalk and was opening the bomb bay doors before the rest of us could grasp what was happening.

At the same time, Frank Gaudio and gunner Jack Holcombe abandoned the nose and came scrambling through the tunnel. In the meantime, Bill Kassay was feverishly checking the settings of the gas valves and finding nothing wrong came forward to the cockpit. He quickly scanned the instruments and seeing that all of the fuel pressure gages were at "0" he reached over and flipped on the switches to the electric gas pumps on each of the four primary systems. There was instant relief as the four engines responded to the resumption of the flow of fuel and roared back to life. I sat there mulling over what had happened and as, I didn't relish crossing the Adriatic Sea with a ship that had malfunctioned, I elected to land at the Island of Vis. On this small mountainous island Tito had located

his headquarters and the British maintained a small emergency field. The single runway was very short and was located in a deep closed end valley so there would be no missed approach and go around. Upon contacting the tower they warned us of the field's shortcomings and that we had to complete our landing once committed.

After a stressful but uneventful landing we ate dinner following which most of us spent the night next to the field and in the tents of the small contingent of Americans stationed there. Don and radio man Ray Eitel volunteered to sleep on the ship and upon entering the plane they started the gasoline Auxiliary Power Unit so that interior lights could be used without running down the batteries. Since they had electricity the two of them decided to listen to the liaison radio receiver thus they pulled out the ship's retractable trailing antenna and strung the wire on the surrounding bushes. It was Saturday night on Vis but back in the States it was Saturday afternoon and they were able to pick up the Army/Navy football game on short wave. In the era B.H.F.M. (before helmet face masks) it was one of the premier sports events in the U.S. However, the A.P.U. soon ran out of gas so they went looking for fuel and immediately ran into a group of tough looking and suspicious Communist guards who spoke no English. Finally, a British Officer came to their rescue and they were able to obtain the gasoline and finish listening to the game.

I don't recall who won that year even though the next morning the two of them bragged enough about listening to the game. Bill and I met with Vis' engineering officer and went over our bomber's gasoline system. We took off the gas caps to make sure that there was adequate fuel, checked the selector valves for leaks and ran the engines at full power for a few minutes. The officer assured us that everything was O.K. At the same time armorer/tail gunner Hank Davies was supervising the unloading of the belts of 50 caliber ammunition to reduce our takeoff weight, and, unknown to me, the two machine guns in the waist joined the belts. Even though we were a bit apprehensive, we took off and flew back to our Squadron without incident. The B-24 fuel system was versatile but it sure had its drawbacks. One of them was the poor efficiency of the tank venting system. This presented no problem on a long climb as the slow venting left the pressure in the tanks higher than the atmosphere and helped feed gas to the engines. However, coming down from altitude

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was a different matter as the venting would not let the air in fast enough and would keep the tanks at a slight vacuum. That was probably the cause of our problem as the engine fuel pumps alone couldn't suck enough gas with the negative pressure in the tanks. 40 years later I was able to experience the same condition in my motor home.

We arrived over Torretta about 1:30 in the afternoon and after the tower gave us landing instructions they told us they would call a truck and that I was to report to Operations as soon as I got to the Squadron. I landed, parked our ship on its stand and after completing our chores we all climbed on the truck. We turned in our flight gear, delivered the camera to the photo shack, and finally returned to our tents. Upon entering Squadron Headquarters Capt. Veiluva, our Operations Officer, immediately pounced on me and demanded to know where we had been. He said that since our two ships were the last ones to get off the ground they had watched us climb until we flew into the cloud base but when the Group returned that afternoon we weren't with them and the leader said that we never made the formation. A check with the 15th Air Force revealed that no other group had reported our flying with them, we had landed at another airport, and they were not aware of any crashes. So as far as Operations knew, following our entering the overcast we had simply disappeared. Thus when the time had passed in which we would have exhausted our fuel they had listed us as Missing In Action. Then some time after midnight they got word that we were OK and had posted a big sign on the Squadron mission board, "Lt. Alexander and crew landed safely on the Isle of Vis". Again he asked me where in the hell we had been. I went through my story, told him of losing all of our engines and as a result decided to land at Vis. They seemed to regard my report as somewhat incredulous so with nothing further to say I returned to my tent.

Soon afterwards I was called back and really given the third degree for they had contacted the group with the tail markings I had portrayed and those people stated that no other ship had flown with them. However, they did say that they had bombed Blechhammer. To this I replied that rather than ask the leader who couldn't see the ships behind him to ask the tail gunner of their tail end B-24 as I had been eye to eye

with him for over six hours. It looked as if I might be losing the critique and I began to get a bit hot around the collar but about that time Don's photos were delivered to Group and they called to say that we had indeed hit the target at Blechhammer. Thus we were saved by the pictures and were given credit for our mission. I subsequently learned that the 461st had missed the target completely and we were one of only three planes of the Group which had hit the place, all by flying with other formations.

With the exception of Prophett, for the past half century our crew has stayed in touch with each other. Unfortunately Eitel, Gaudio and Prophett are no longer with us and this year Lee Emanuel lost his wife. Along with our wives, several of us have attended three reunions: in 1986 Askerman, Davies, Kassay and I in San Antonio; in 1987 Davies and I in Tarrytown; and in 1993 Askerman, Homcombe and I in Fresno where we ran into Herb Frank who flew half a dozen missions as our co-pilot. Hope to see you in Hampton.

Clair Alexander

764th B.S.

Oct '44 thru May '45

Dear Frank,

Received your letter on Monday, September 20, 1993. Thanks for such a timely response. My brother, Tom, happened to stop by my house the same night. I showed the package to him. I do believe it made his day. I don't know if I can convey to you the joy and excitement you have brought to my brother and I. We thank you.

I could not believe my luck when, within two minutes you were able to give me my father's crew number, and names of co-crewmembers, and addresses. You were so nonchalant about the whole thing, but I forgot you lived the history I was seeking. I could've talked to you all day. I'm so grateful to you and your organization. If there's anything I can do to return the favor, you name it.

I'm planning on writing to my father's crewmembers. I hope they don't find it an invasion of their privacy.

My brother and I are planning to join your organization as Associate members (we'd be honored if allowed). Hopes are, we will be able to attend your 1994 reunion in Virginia and meet some of you fellows.

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Something else we are planning is to contribute to "The Collings Foundation". They're the ones that fly the restored B-24 around the country. With our contribution we will be able to put our Dad's name, Bomb Group, and Squadron on the plane so that some of the boys of the 461st may see it and feel proud. There are two planes named "Stinky" on the "All American" but one more won't hurt. I don't believe the others are the same plane. They're not located with the correct Bomb Group or Squadron. With the contribution, we are also entitled to two rides in the "All American". We will ride together in memory of Dad. Maybe we could also set something up whereby one of the 461st boys who would want to, but for whatever reason can't, could receive a ride on the "All American".

Again, I would like to thank you, and wish you well. Please don't ever stop what you're doing. It's important. Thanks for doing your time in the military to make the U.S.A. a better place to live. It worked!

I'll write again soon, but if I don't put an ending on this now, I'll forget to mail it.

Yours truly,
James T. Deacon
Sgt. (E-4) Ret.
410th Civil Engineers
United States Air Force

Editor's note: I believe the father was Joh T. Deacon, Radio Operator/Gunner on crew #3 of the 764th B.S.

March 1994

To Whom It May Concern:

I am sorry to tell you my husband Robert W. Eckman died Feb. 5, 1994 in our home after a struggle from cancer. He was the oldest graduate from Community College in May '93. He went to school in a wheel chair and took his last course at home with my taking his work to school and picking up his assignments. He graduated Cum Laude and we were so

proud of him. I feel he is in a better place, no wheel chair and no morphine. He is pain free. I miss him so much.

Thank you,
Mr. R. W. Eckman

Dear George,

I recently queried The Caterpillar Club concerning the "other" association as I was suspect of its validity after seeing the bit of information in the last "Liberaider". I happen to belong to both groups.

Frank requested I send the reply I received to you. Perhaps this will "clear the air", so to speak, if any of our Group is having doubts.

Trefry A. Ross
765th Bomb Squadron

THE CATERPILLAR CLUB

The Caterpillar Club was formed in 1922 after Lt. Harris bailed out of an airplane over Dayton Ohio. Since that time, thousands of airmen, flyers and passengers have enrolled in this organization. We have no dues, and the initiation fee is nominal (\$10). An attempt was made to formally organize the Clud into chapters in 1943, and again after the war in 1947. This takes a lot of effort and although the club is incorporated and Caterpillar Club is copyrighted, the dedicated interest after the way was not there.

The Caterpillar Association was not formed until sometime in 1983. Yet they try to claim the laurels of the long history of the Caterpillar Club.

Among the many Caterpillars who carry or carried Caterpillar Club membership cards are former President George Bush, General Doolittle, and Colonel Lindbergh, to name a few. Whereas the Club requires some documentation as to the authenticity of the jump before a card is issued (military orders, reports and/or newspaper accounts), the Caterpillar Association sells their membership cards without re-

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striction for \$3 each.

The above is not to detract from some of the dedicated men within the Association who hope to have an organized group where commanders are elected are charged, and financial reports are given.

Thank you for your interest in the Caterpillar Club. If there is any way I may be of further assistance please feel free to contact me at the following address:

**THE CATERPILLAR CLUB
C/o SWITLIK PARACHUTE CO., INC
1325 EAST STATE STREET
P.O. BOX 1328
TRENTON, NJ 08607**

Sincerely,
Debra J. Spencer
The Caterpillar Club

* * * * *

Editor's note: The following letter falls into the "Small World" category.

Dear Frank,

I am sorry to report that I am not the Charles H. Collins whom you are trying to locate. I was a WWII pilot in Europe and Africa, but was flying for the Air Transport Command. I can well remember spotting the huge formations over Italy on their way north. We used to listen to the battle channel on the command radio set to attempt to learn what was going on.

I did get to fly a B-17 home from Bury-St-Edmond in England to Florida via the South Atlantic route. We made the eight day trip without a hitch, including the 10 hour trip from Dakar to Natal. Incidentally, we were carrying no navigator! I did stay in the Reserve and finally in 1963 switched to the RI Air National Guard from which I retired in 1979.

I admire your hard work and devotion in trying to as-

semble your group after so many years. Keep up the good work. I play tennis every week with one of your B-24 navigators, Frederick D. Massie, who was in the 766th Sq and stationed at Cerignola, Italy in 1944-45. He is on your list, I believe.

Charles H. Collins
Rumford, RI

To the Editor,

This is a follow-up to the story on page 11 of the Dec 1993 issue of the 461st Liberaider.

I was a bombardier in the 764th Sq. that flew bombs, gas and ammo for General Patton's troops to Lyon, France the day that the lead B-24 caught fire. We were lined up and unloading our bombs, gas and ammo. There must have been at least 100 B-24's lined up nose to tail with very little room to turn away. The lead plane started to burn up in the nose section. The entire personnel on the field ran across the field to escape the explosions which we expected to blow the field to hell. After a few minutes when this did not happen, we all ran back to save the planes. I saw bravery you wouldn't believe. There were a number of English soldiers stationed at that field pushing those 500 pound bombs out of the way with their hands and those bombs were hot to the touch. I rolled mine away with my boots on.

At that time men were on the tail and wings of the #2 B-24 shaking the wings and trying to swing the tail to the left side until the nose of the 2nd B-24 was clear of the burning plane. They then taxied #2 across the field out of harms way. The next planes in the row followed suit until all the planes were moved out.

Fortunately the burning plane burned from the nose to tail without exploding.

Joseph Breshinsky
Class 43-6 Midland
318 Dielman Road
Olivette, MO 63132

To the Editor:
Liberaider Re: Mission #45

I don't remember details of most of my missions, but this one, I do.

We left Torretta for Munich with a radar ship in the

(Continued on page 10)

(Continued from page 9)

lead. Major Dooley was #2 and we (Crew #55, Lt. Settle, pilot) in #3 position. When we got over the Adriatic, there was a solid undercast, so that we were in the sunlight but we could see nothing below. As we approached the end of the undercast, about 40 or 50 minutes later, the lead ship aborted. Major Dooley took over, and we took over the #2 spot.

The #1 ship veered away from the planned flight path and headed about 60° off course up the Po Valley. I called Lt. Settle and told him what was happening and he asked me if I thought that he should break radio silence and inform Major Dooley that we were prepared to take over the lead since it was obvious that his navigator was confused.

For reasons that I don't recall, I was reluctant to take over the group lead and we decided not to break radio silence. We flew up the Po Valley, turned north over the Alps, spent about 10 minutes over Switzerland, turned back and headed for our tertiary target, the oil storage tanks on an island south of Venice.

Joel Fish
Navigator, Crew #55

March 1994

Dear George,

This article and photo has reference to the "Old 767 Warriors" which appeared in the July 1990 issue of the "LiberAider". It probably could be titled "More Old Warriors—This Time From Michigan".

It seems to me as though the 767ers are everywhere (sometimes supplemented by "Old Warriors" from other groups) as in this instance.

The three of us from the left were found in the church. The Warrior on the right wrote a book which scared me—so he's included.

From the left we have Bud Haxxard of the 376th Group, 514th Squadron; myself from the 767th Squadron, 461st Group, Thomas Moore also from

the 767th Squadron and Claude Porter from the 459th Group, 756th Squadron.

Bud was an early bird and flew out of Africa. He was a Navigator and was flying on the same mission as the ill-fated "Lady-Be-Good".

My crew and I, came late and left early from the 461st Bomb Group. We tell Tom Moore we were his replacement. Thomas Moore (the leader of the group shown became a POW and has spent his life-time making up for it.

Claude Porter was likewise a POW and wrote the "scary" book I mentioned earlier, "Cuckoo Over Vienna". Read it, and make certain your shoulder belt is fastened.

I have a great deal of respect for all the "Old Warriors", the "Fly Boys", and the support crews of the USAAF and most importantly the crews of today's U.S.A.F. "Here's a toast" etc. to us all.

Marty G. Mertz
Kewadin, MI



* * * * *

Editor's note: In response to the inquiry about the origin of the Group and Squadron insignias presented on page 21 of the December issue of the "LiberAider", I received a postcard from Odess Lovin (767th Squadron) stating that Wayne Pifer (767th Squadron helped design the insignias. I wrote to

(Continued on page 11)

(Continued from page 10)

Wayne and his reply follows: Unfortunately his pictures are not reproducible. The picture of Odess Lovin is from the "Liberaiders", printed in December 1944 in Italy.

February 1994

Dear George,

There is not a whole lot to tell about the Group Insignia. All I can remember is in our early days in Italy Ed Schrader came to me and asked me to design an emblem for the 461st to be used as a lapel pin. They chose my design because it had fewer lines and I am sure, easier to make.

Enclosed is a picture of the first two they made. They are made of copper, then painted blue, white and yellow. The pins on the back are soldered and very crude, but they worked. They were 1 3/8" x 1 1/8" and a little heavy. I have no idea how many they made. I guess it was forgotten for more important things at the time.

The design is on the same order as the first picture I painted on a B-24. It was number 71, "The Thunder Mug". A baby with two or three streaks of lightning in his one hand and a bomb in the other and a pot beneath him.

I don't remember how many I painted after that. "Hot Toddy" was another, a picture of a bottle and a champagne glass.

In one of the "Liberaiders" you had a picture of Odess Lovin the crew chief. In the background "Bushwacker" could be seen. That was brushed on a half-hour before its final mission. No time for a picture, so it just stayed that way until it went down.

If there is anything else I can do for you, let me know.

By the way, I started cutting hair in the 461st in the states and I am still cutting. Over 50 years. I am 71.

Wayne Pifer
833 Frost Road #104
Streetsboro, OH 44241



**Crew Chief Odess Lovin—1944
With "Bushwacker"**



Barber/Artist Wayne Pifer—1992

* * * * *

January 1994

Dear George,

In response to Bill Harrison's letter about the incident involving the convoy as it entered the Mediterranean Sea (See page 13 of the December 1993 issue of the "Liberaiders"), I remember it well. I would not be surprised if Bill and I were on the same ship whose name I have forgotten.

At the time I was with Captain Walter Mitton, with whom I had shared a room at Fresno, and Chaplain Rasmussen. We began to hear a lot of noise and got

(Continued on page 12)

(Continued from page 11)

the word that everyone should go up on deck without delay. All that we really saw was a Fourth-of-July display of anti-aircraft fire.

I suppose it is interesting to note in retrospect that some days earlier, we had met with the captain of the ship who, when someone asked him how long it would take the ship to sink, had responded that it might take a matter of minutes. Anyhow, a lot of people on deck were remembering the captain's words.

We learned nothing beyond what Bill mentions in his letter. By an arrangement with the merchant marine personnel, I had gotten permission to come upstairs once a day and listen to the radio, and would then post a daily news bulletin. That is how we learned about the landing at Anzio. However, no one upstairs had anything to say about what happened in this particular incident.

Hope this brief account will prove interesting.

Norman T. Boggs
Red Cross Field Director
461st Bomb Group
45 Aspen Drive
North Brunswick, NJ 08902

* * * * *

(Continued from page 2)

Dues are \$4.61 per year. However, most members contribute more than that. Life memberships are \$50.00.

Your dues must be paid in order to receive the "Liberaider" (a very prudent investment) and to attend the reunion.

The Treasurer requests that when you send your dues or address changes please indicate which Squadron you are in. Put it on your check, it makes it easier for him to credit your account. Your Squadron Number is shown on your address label above your name.

CAN YOU STILL SING IT?

The United States Army Air Corps Song

Off we go, into the wild blue yonder,
Climbing high, into the sun.
Here they come, zooming to meet our thunder
At 'em boys, give her the gun.
Down we dive, spouting our flame from under,
Off with one hell of a roar.
We live in fame, or go down in flame,
For, nothing can stop the Army Air Corps.

CHORUS (repeat after each verse)

*Here's a toast to the host, of those
Who love the vastness of the sky.
To a friend, we'll send a message of
His brother men who fly.
We drink to those, who gave their all of old,
Then down we roar to score the
Rainbow's pot of gold.
Here's a toast, to the host of the men we boast,
The Army Air Corps.*

Minds of men fashioned a crate of thunder,
Sent it high into the blue.
Hands of men blasted the world asunder;
How they lived, God only knew.
Souls of men, dreaming of skies to conquer,
Gave us wings, ever to soar.
With scouts before and bombers galore,
Nothing can stop the Army Air Corps.

CHORUS

Off we go into the blue sky yonder,
Keep your wings level and true.
If you'd live to be a gray-haired wonder,
Keep your nose out of the blue.
Flying men, guarding our nation's borders,
In echelon, we carry on,
For, nothing can stop the Army Air Corps.

CHORUS

TAPS
MAY THEY REST IN PEACE FOREVER

<u>SQD</u>	<u>NAME</u>	<u>DECEASED</u>	<u>HOMETOWN</u>	<u>DUTY</u>
HDQ	Bredice, Charles H.	1990	Ionia, MI	Clerk-Adm & Tech
	Buie, Jr., Wilson R.	1992	Arlington, VA	Operations
764	Chappell, Frank J.	1992	Ashville, NC	A/C Armor/Gunner
	Dagle, Paul A.	1983	Cleveland, OH	A/C Mech & Gunner
	Dudley, Jay K.	Unk	Moorestown, NJ	Photo Lab Tech
	Eitel, Ray	1992	Florence, AL	Radio Oper/Gunner
	Erwin, Robert E.	Unk	Mapleton, IA	Radio Oper/Gunner
	Farley, George D.	1967	Wellsville, NY	A/C Armor/Gunner
	Feeny, James B.	1970	Sommerville, MA	
	Hendricks, Kenneth I.	1967	Alexandria Bay	Bombardier
	Jackson, John T.	1994	West Branch, MI	A/C Armor/Gunner
	Kitchens, Milan G.	1993	Omega, GA	A/C Eng Mech
	Landers, Elmer L.	1976	Detroit, MI	
	Leghner, Walter E.	1989	Charlotte, NC	A/C Mech & Gunner
	McCann, Thomas W.	1969	Freehold, NJ	Munition Worker
	Meredith, Norman R.	1989	Dallas, TX	A/C Armor/Gunner
	Reville, John J.	1986	Schenectady, NY	Navigator
	Robertson, Sr., David D.	1994	Lunenburg, MA	A/C Armor/Gunner
	Roedel, Earl F.	1959		Turret & Sight Mech
	Ross, Harold C.	1992		Teletype Oper
	Seedley, Thomas A.	1988	New York, NY	Clerk Typist
	Southworth, Jr., Ralph J.	1993	Long Beach, CA	Duty Soldier
	Wells, Bryan J.	Unk	N. Kansas City	
	White, Robert W.	1986	Sharon, PA	Navigator
	Zimmerman, Edward W.	1992	Fontana, CA	A/C Armor/Gunner
765	Baran, Jr., Walter	1994	Fayetteville, NY	Pilot B-24
	Bernstein, Irving	1988	Brooklyn, NY	Sheet Medal
	Colavito, James J., Jr.	1992	Tuscon, AZ	Bombardier
	Connell, Hugh X.	1971	Newark, NJ	Clerk Adm & Tech
	Daniel, William R.	1978		A/C Armorer
	Davenport, Robert L.	1980	Chicago, IL	Auto Equip Messenger
	Ducharme, Eugene O.	1993	Little Falls, NJ	A/C Mech & Gunner
	Greer, Joseph H.	1977	Poplar Bluff, MD	Medic Corpsman
	Helwig, Jr., Fred A.	1981	River Forest, IL	Aerial Gunner
	Higgins, John J.	1985	Flint, MI	A/C Armor/Gunner
	Horacek, William J.	1993	Feeding Hills, MA	A/C Eng Mech
	Light, Otto T.	1993	Dallas, TX	A/C Armor/Gunner
	Newman, Herbert L.	1984	Forked River, NJ	A/C Armor/Gunner
	Rick, Wendell E.	1989		Radio Oper/Gunner
	Turner, Robert M.	KIA	Osweego, NY	A/C Armor/Gunner
	Valliencourt, Lloyd J.	1987	Marion, MI	
	Walker, Lloyd O	1980	Denver, CO	A/C Prop Mech

TAPS
MAY THEY REST IN PEACE FOREVER

<u>SQD</u>	<u>NAME</u>	<u>DECEASED</u>	<u>HOMETOWN</u>	<u>DUTY</u>
765	Wilks, Thomas O.	1967	Denver, CO	Cook's Helper
	Wilson, Jr., John M.	1989	Houston, TX	Pilot B-24
766	Becker, Walter	1973	Brooklyn, NY	
	Bills, Roland F.	1994	Palm Bay, FL	A/C & Eng Mech
	Bishop, Charles F.	1990	Atlanta, GA	A/C Prop Mech
	Bonnefon, Joseph	1984		Auto Equip Mech
	Butofsky, Harry F.	1993	W. Orange, NJ	Pilot B-24
	Clark, Jr., Earl B.	Unk		Radio Oper/Gunner
	Cline, Ralph E.	1973	Brinkhaven, OH	A/C Armor/Gunner
	Duffy, Thomas J.	1990		Crypto
	Duke, James Q.	1975		Pilot B-24
	Eckle, Joseph B.	1991	Chicago, IL	Radio Oper/Gunner
	Eckman, Robert W.	1994	Phoenix, AZ	Bombardier
	Fetbroth, Ira L.	1994	Waltham, MA	Clerk Typist
	Glover, William E.	1973	Rocky Mountain	A/C Armor/Gunner
	Hains, John J.	1983	Bookeelia, FL	A/C & Eng Mech
	Hennon, Erwin R.	1993	Apopka, FL	A/C Armor/Gunner
	Herman, Kenneth G.	1984		A/C & Eng Mech
	Jansen, Paul J.	1955	Pipestone, MN	A/C Armor/Gunner
	Jensen, Joseph A.	1965	MN	Munition Worker
	Maloney, Joseph G.	1986	Troy, NY	Cook
	McCombs, Arthur E.	1956		Decon Equip Oper
	McGroarty, William H.	1959	Minneapolis, MN	A/C Armor/Gunner
	Miller, Herbert G.	1966	Toledo, OH	A/C Armor/Gunner
	Mitchell, Samuel D.	1979	Pittsburgh, PA	Airplane Insp
	Moore, James B.	1981	OK	A/C Armor/Gunner
	Morneau, Maurice J.	1980		A/C Armor/Gunner
	Muckerman, Jr.,	1969	St. Louis, MO	A/C Armor/Gunner
	Navoy, Henry	1990		A/C & Eng Mech
	Patterson, Jr., Robert O.	1993	Monterey, CA	Aerial Camera Tech
	Patzer, George R.	1983		Pilot B-24
	Pugh, Charles M.	1980	Pikeville, TN	A/C Mech/Gunner
	Pugh, Jr., Ulysess S.	1980		A/C Armor/Gunner
	Reath, John C.	1980		Auto Equip Oper
	Ruble, Charles D.	1985	Columbus, OH	A/C Maint Tech
	Saffels, Joseph C.	1992		Radar Tech
	Spence, John E.	1986		A/C Mech/Gunner
	Tebbens, John R.	1981	Chicago, IL	Pilot B-24
	Tessier, Oliver L.	1993	Gonic, NH	A/C Mech/Gunner
	Telleson, William J.	1991	Bull Shoals, AR	Radio Oper/Gunner
	Trout, Kenneth E.	1976	Lemon, CO	A/C Armor/Gunner
	Vermillion, Roy O.	1993	Dixon, IL	A/C & Eng Mech
	Vicker, Evelyn L.	1966	WA	A/C Refuel Oper

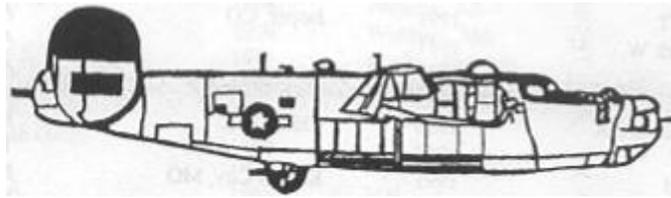
TAPS
MAY THEY REST IN PEACE FOREVER

<u>SQD</u>	<u>NAME</u>	<u>DECEASED</u>	<u>HOMETOWN</u>	<u>DUTY</u>
766	Wilson, Jr., Ewell V.	1989		A/C & Eng Mech
767	Amos, Miles E.	1992	Orange, CA	Bombardier
	Austin, William F.	1993	Greenville, SC	Pilot B-24
	Beatty, Oliver H.	1968	Wellsburg, WV	Radio Oper/Gunner
	Berg, Edward P.	1993		
	Coles, Jr., John W.	1993	Livingston, TX	Navigator
	Devlin, James W.	1980	PA	Auto Equip Oper
	Engelke, Wilfred A.	1994	Brownwood, TX	Radio Oper/Gunner
	Flairty, Joseph H.	1979		Munition Worker
	Galvan, Robert A.	1956	San Antonio, TX	Pilot B-24
	Greenwood, Lloyd T.	1982		Com Chief
	Hibbard, Joseph I.	1964		A/C Armor/Gunner
	Hooker, Brevitt	1982		A/C Mech & Gunner
	Hudson, Joseph T.	1991	Jasper, CO	A/C Armor/Gunner
	Hughes, Frederick W.	1981		A/C Armor/Gunner
	Kidd, James E.	1971		A/C Refuel Oper
	King, Floyd E.	1989		Munition Worker
	Kwiatkowski, Edward A.	1986	Chicago, IL	Munition Worker
	Lerch, Charles F.	1984		Turret & Gunsight Mech
	Mackey, Edward	1991	Kansas City, MO	Radio Oper/Gunner
	Malseed, Leonard F.	1983		
	Marton, George P.	1976		Clerk Adm & Tech
	McMeans, James D.	1988	Shelbyville, TX	A/C Eng Mech
	Miller, Warren K.	1986	Callicoon, NY	Pilot B-24
	Moss, Frank	1979	Cleveland, OH	A/C Eng Mech
	Myers, Michael	1969	N. Hills, PA	A/C Mech & Mech
	Ortiz, Gilbert M.	1975	New York, NY	Sheet Metal
	Pickens, Albert J.	1990	New York, NY	Bombardier
	Pomeroy, Robert A.	1963	Detroit, MI	Med Adm Spec NCO
	Rigsby, Grover W.	1991		A/C Eng Mech
	Riley, William E.	1981		
	Rosenthal, Leonard R.	1993	Putnam Valley	Bombardier
	Sanford, Jessie L.	1971		Munition Worker
	Sastamoinen, Olaf H.	1979		
	Senning, Harry M.	1992	Youngstown, OH	Navigator
	Shaw, John L.	1987		A/C Mech/Gunner
	Shipman, James N.	1975	Jal, NM	A/C Armor/Gunner
	Smith, Clyde O.	1986		Cook
	Southerland, Olan W.	1993	Aurora, CO	A/C Armor/Gunner
	Spencer, Lesley C.	1984	Versailles, KY	A/C Armor/Gunner
	Stringer, Stewart J.	1972		A/C Eng Mech
	Strukamp, Elmer R.	1993	Rockford, OH	Cook's Helper
	Swanson, Robert E.	1948		Radio Oper

TAPS
MAY THEY REST IN PEACE FOREVER

<u>SQD</u>	<u>NAME</u>	<u>DECEASED</u>	<u>HOMETOWN</u>	<u>DUTY</u>
767	Sweeney, James K.	1993	Haverhill, MA	Radio Oper/Gunner
	Taylor, Joel W.	1987	Houston, TX	Gunnery Inst
	Torres, Matias M.	1988		
	Vanesian, Karnig	1985		Navigator
	Vasta, Michael S.	1977		Radar Tech
	Weinstock, Herman	1956	Brooklyn, NY	Navigator
76?	Easterwood, Thea J.	1992	Union City, TN	Bombardier

Editor's note: Can anyone identify which Squadron T.J. Easterwood belonged to? This list was gathered between December 31, 1993 and June 1, 1994. Please provide any additional information regarding any "Unknowns" (Unk) you may have listed in your records to Frank O'Bannon, 9260 Fostoria Drive, Tucson, AZ 85741. Thanks!!!!

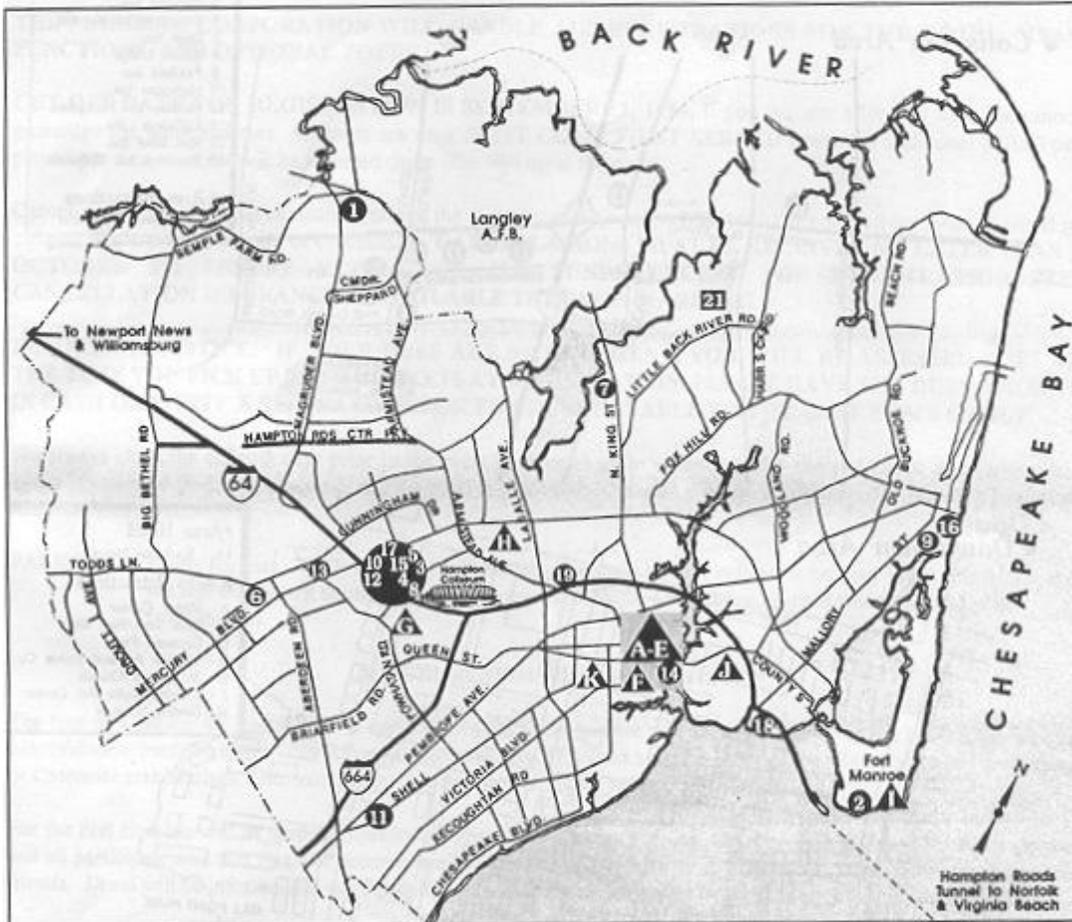


**Men Returning From Detached Service
From 12-31-93 to 6-1-94**

HDQ	Tallant, Robert L., Jr.		
764	Norman L. Carter	Jones, Earl C.	Ray, Albert
	Glandon, James D.	McDonough, John J.	Seene, Charles F.
	Hallen, Jesse	Miller, Donald E.	Shorowski, Leo
765	Alford, Chester R.	Copo, Alphonse A.	
766	Davis, Charles P.	Lecow, Louis	Stevenson, Ian R.
	Downes, Howard M.	Nystrom, Norbert W.	Wilkins, James J.
	Hoogeveen, Stanley W.	Olzewski, Peter	Williamson, Robert C
767	Fassbender, Loran J.	Kopp (Kopatonsky), Phillip	Norton, Harold R.
	Graham, Harold L	Martin, Gerald E., Jr.	Sundeen, Robert W.
	Halverson, Morris O.		

Hampton

FROM THE SEA TO THE STARS



● **Hampton Hotels**

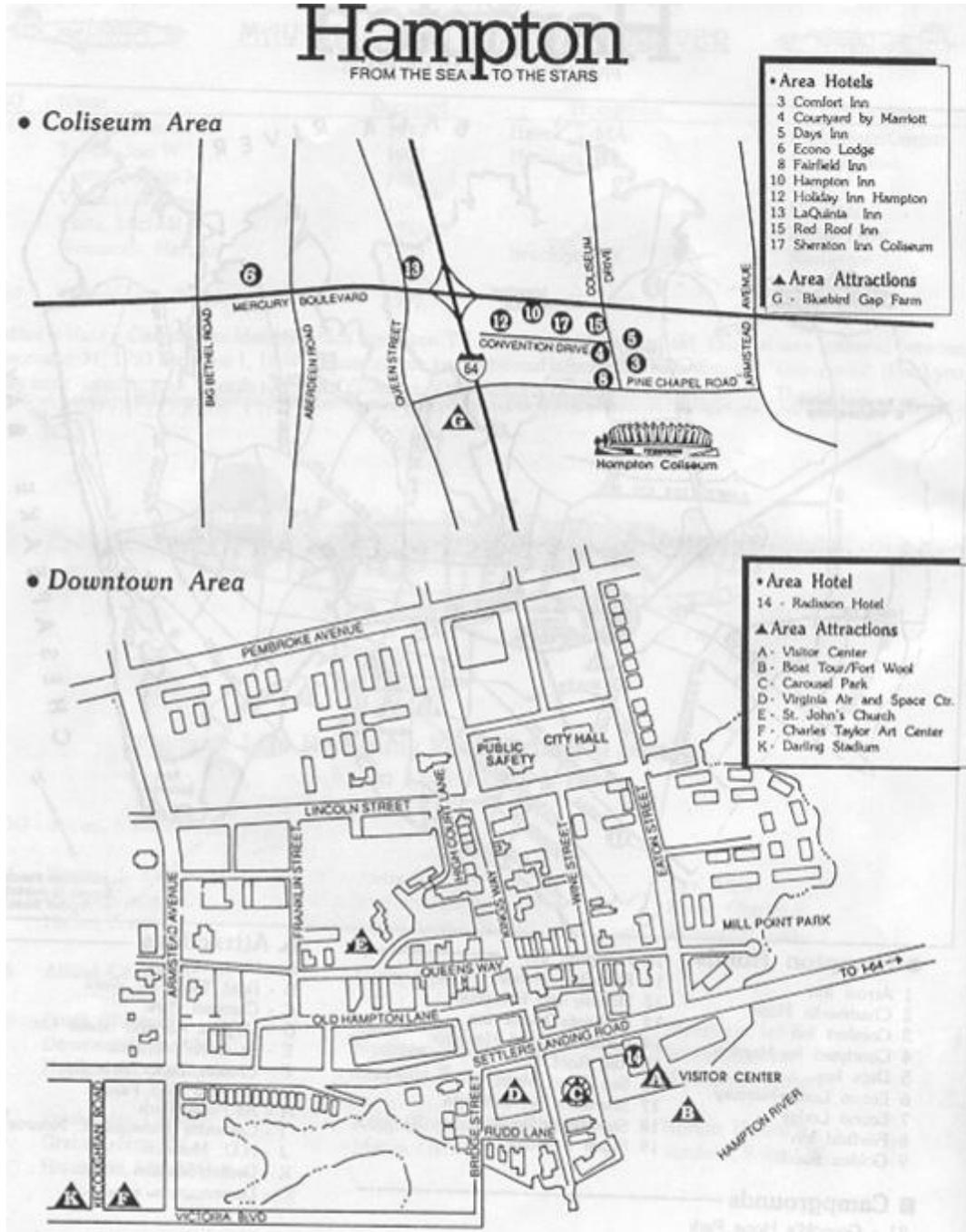
- | | |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1 Arrow Inn | 10 Hampton Inn |
| 2 Chamberlin Hotel | 11 Hampton Manor |
| 3 Comfort Inn | 12 Holiday Inn Hampton |
| 4 Courtyard by Marriott | 13 LaQuinta Motor Inn |
| 5 Days Inn | 14 Radisson Hotel Hampton |
| 6 Econo Lodge-Mercury | 15 Red Roof Inn |
| 7 Econo Lodge | 16 San Souci Motel |
| 8 Fairfield Inn | 17 Sheraton Inn Coliseum |
| 9 Golden Sands | 18 Strawberry Banks |
| | 19 Super 8 Motel |

■ **Campgrounds**

- 21 - Gosnold's Hope Park

▲ **Attractions**

- A - Visitor Center
- B - Boat Tour/Fort Wool
- C - Carousel Park
- D - Virginia Air and Space Ctr.
- E - St. John's Church
- F - Charles Taylor Arts Ctr.
- G - Bluebird Gap Farm
- H - Air Power Park
- I - Casemate Museum/Ft. Monroe
- J - H.U. Museum
- K - Darling Stadium
- - Downtown (See Detailed Map)



461ST BOMB GROUP (H) 1943-1945, Inc.
ANNUAL REUNION
HAMPTON, VIRGINIA
HEADQUARTERS: HOLIDAY INN, HAMPTON CALISEUM

THE MARIMAC CORPORATION WILL HANDLE ALL REGISTRATIONS FOR THE HOTEL, MEAL FUNCTIONS, AND OPTIONAL TOURS.

CUT OFF DATE FOR REGISTRATION IS SEPTEMBER 12, 1994. If you register after that date, we cannot guarantee the hotel and rate. All tours are on a **FIRST COME FIRST SERVE** basis. An additional \$10.00 per person per tour or event will be assessed those who sign up at the door.

Cancellations will be fully refundable (except the registration fee) unless MariMac Corporation has been required to obligate funds prior to receipt of cancellation. **CANCELLATIONS MUST BE RECEIVED NO LATER THAN 5 OCTOBER TO ENSURE RETURN OF ALL FUNDS EXCEPT THE REGISTRATION FEE. CANCELLATION INSURANCE IS AVAILABLE THROUGH MARIMAC.**

IMPORTANT NOTICE: IF YOUR DUES ARE NOT CURRENT, YOU WILL BE ASSESSED DUES AT THE TIME YOU PICK UP YOUR PACKET AT REGISTRATION. PLEASE HAVE THE DUES AMOUNT IN CASH OR WRITE A SEPARATE CHECK FOR DUES PAYABLE TO THE 461ST BOMB GROUP.

We always close the office 3 days prior to the event in order to go in advance to the site and check all arrangements again. If you need us during that time, call the hotel at (804) 838-0200 and give them a message for Marietta McCanse, MariMac Corporation.

PARKING: Plenty for cars—No RV hookups. If you are coming in an RV, indicate it on your registration form and we will send you a sheet of information provided by the Convention Bureau when we send your confirmation.

MISCELLANEOUS INFORMATION

The tour of Langley Air Force Base is approximately 2 hours and we will finish with lunch at the NCO Club with its beautiful view over the water. Everyone will enjoy this tour. If you do not take either of the afternoon tours (the Pottery or Casemate and Mariner's Museums) you will be dropped off at the hotel after lunch.

For the first time we will be holding Squadron Dinners on Thursday evening, October 13th at 7:30 PM. We hope you will all participate and that this will become a regular event, as it gives you an opportunity to be with your Squadron friends. Dress will be informal but our President requests they be somewhat better than jock straps and barracks bags.

The Pottery Tour was planned with the ladies in mind, but men who like to shop are also welcome. The Pottery has a little bit of everything so it's lots of fun. At the same time, we will be taking the Casemate and Mariner's Museums Tour. Please choose one or the other. Casemate is located at Fort Monroe and is a network of caverns that once held Fort Monroe's massive guns. The museum vividly recounts the history of the Civil War and the U.S. Coast Artillery. Robert E. Lee was stationed there and is said to have had a hand in its design. The Mariner's Museum contains almost every type of boat imaginable, from the first canoes to the latest in Chris Craft. But the most interesting to me is the collection of hand carved miniature boats. You are able to view some of them through magnifiers in the glass cases.

The activities on Friday have been planned so that everyone will have the opportunity to take the cruise as well as visit the beautiful Air and Space Museum. The cruise is about 3 hours and takes you on a tour of Fort Wool, a pre-Civil War island fortress, as well as cruising past ships docked at the world's largest navel base.

(Continued on page 22)

REUNION 1994—HAMPTON, VIRGINIA

Editor's note: The MariMac Corporation wishes to apologize to any of you who may have tried to call 1-800-292-1490 between May 24th and June 8th. We were in the process of switching long distance carriers and somebody crossed the wires. The phone is up and running now, so please feel free to call with any questions you may have

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

WEDNESDAY—October 12, 1994

- | | |
|---------------|--|
| 12:00—6:00 PM | Welcome and pick up nametags, etc. Reminisce with old and new buddies. Complimentary coffee. |
| 6:00—7:00 PM | Welcome reception. |

Thursday—October 13, 1994

- | | |
|---------------|---|
| 9:30—12:30 PM | Tour Langley AFB—lunch at NCO Club. |
| 12:30—5:00 PM | Tour Casemate Museum and Mariner's Museum. |
| 12:30—5:00 PM | Ladies' shopping tour at the pottery (men welcome). |
| 5:45—6:45 PM | Board Meeting |
| 7:30—9:30 PM | Squadron Dinners (Informal but appropriate dress please). |

Friday—October 14, 1994

Group 1 (1st 137 WHO SIGN UP)

- | | |
|----------------|--|
| 10:00—12:30 PM | Tour Air & Space Museum (shuttle service starts at 9:45 AM).
Have lunch on your own, take a ride on the carousel and board boat 1:30. |
| 2:00—5:00 PM | Miss Hampton Cruise (charter for 137 max) and return to hotel immediately after. |

Group 2 (LATER SIGNUPS)

- | | |
|---------------|---|
| 10:00—1:00 PM | Miss Hampton Cruise for those who did not sign up in time for the charter. (shuttle service starts 9:30 AM) Those who are on the morning cruise take first buses. |
| 1:00—5:00 PM | Have lunch on your own, take a ride on the carousel, and tour Air & Space Museum. Buses will leave for hotel as filled, beginning at 4:00 PM. |
| 6:00—7:00 PM | Annual Meeting—Open To Everyone. |

Saturday—October 15, 1994

- | | |
|---------------|---|
| 8:30—4:00 PM | Colonial Williamsburg or |
| 8:45—4:00 PM | Jamestown & Yorktown, LUNCH ON YOUR OWN IN JAMESTOWN. |
| 6:30—7:30 PM | Social Hour |
| 7:30—8:30 PM | Banquet Dinner |
| 8:30—11:30 PM | Dancing and Socializing |

Sunday—October 16, 1994

- | | |
|---------|---|
| 8:00 AM | Memorial Service |
| 8:30 AM | Buffet breakfast—After breakfast it is time to visit more with your friends and say good-byes until next reunion. |

DON'T FORGET—CHECKOUT TIME IS 12:00 NOON.

PLEASE CHECK THE BULLETIN BOARD FOR ANY EVENT TIME CHANGES.

REUNION HEADQUARTERS: HOLIDAY INN—12-16 October 1994

**PLEASE FILL OUT AND MAIL THIS REGISTRATION FORM TO:
 461st Bomb Group, c/o MariMac
 6790 E. Calle Dorado
 Tucson, AZ 85715**

Enclosed is my check as payment for the following:		# OF PERS		TOTAL AMT
	Registration Fee (non-refundable)	_____	@\$10.00	_____
Wed 12 Oct	Welcome Reception	_____		Complimentary
Thu 13 Oct	Tour Langley/lunch NCO Club	_____	@\$18.00	_____
Thu 13 Oct	Casemate & Mariner's Museums	_____	@\$13.00	_____
Thu 13 Oct	Pottery Factory Shopping Tour	_____	@\$11.00	_____
Thu 13 Oct	_____th Squadron Dinner	_____	@\$19.50	_____
Fri 14 Oct	Air/Space Museum & Cruise	_____	@\$34.50	_____
Sat 15 Oct	Colonial Williamsburg or	_____	@\$29.50	_____
Sat 15 Oct	Jamestown/Yorktown Tour	_____	@\$23.50	_____
Sat 15 Oct	Banquet & Dance	_____	@\$24.00	_____
Sun 16 Oct	Memorial Breakfast	_____	@\$7.50	_____

(ALL OPTIONS MUST BE PAID WITH REGISTRATION) \$ _____
Option Total

FORM OF PAYMENT FOR HOTEL _____
 Check or Credit Card Name, Number, Expiration Date

If payment by check the rate is \$77 per night _____ @ \$77
Nights Hotel Total
Total Amount Submitted \$ _____

(PLEASE MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO 461ST BOMB GROUP or MARIMAC CORP)

Name: _____ Squadron: _____

Spouse: _____ Children/Guest: _____

Your Address _____
Street or P.O. Box
 City: _____ State: _____ Phone: _____

Arrival Date: _____ Departure Date: _____

(Continued from page 19)

We are chartering the boat (which has a capacity of 137) for the afternoon tour and will first fill the charter, and anyone else who signs up will be put on the morning tour. The boat dock is very near the Air and Space Museum and there is a wonderful old restored carousel in the area. I hadn't been on a merry-go-round in years, and it was fun, so take time to try it. There are also several places to eat in the immediate area. The Air and Space Museum Tour includes IMAX theatre.

Since Colonial Williamsburg and Busch Gardens take most of a day, we decided not to offer both. Colonial Williamsburg is the site on an exciting chapter of America's past. The largest outdoor living history museum in the country is an entire restored eighteenth century city. There are a number of places to eat (including four restored taverns, Campbell's, Chowning's, King's Arms and Shields). Campbell's was George Washington's favorite tavern because she provided the best in food and drink. There is a shuttle bus available to get from one end of the "city" to the other. The Jamestown-Yorktown tour will be going out at the approximate same time as Williamsburg, so please choose one or the other.

Busch Gardens is fun for all ages, and your admission ticket entitles you to all regularly scheduled rides, shows and attractions. This is one of the things we recommend you do on your own, either before or after the reunion. Stroll through the beautifully landscaped European style villages, browse through the shops and take in a show. You will especially enjoy touring the park by train, the scenic Skyride and the peaceful Rhine River Cruise.

It is also possible to tour one of the ships at Norfolk on Saturday and Sunday afternoons, but this is something you will have to do on your own as we couldn't find time to fit it in.

The Holiday Inn provides complimentary shuttle service from the Newport News airport. If you fly into Norfolk, the shuttle fare is \$21.00 each way for 2 people or \$15.50 each way for one. If 5 or more happen to be traveling at the same time, it drops to \$6.50 per person.

The Holiday Inn will allow their shuttle to be used (on a space available basis) to go to a nearby mall for your shopping pleasure.

PLEASE BEAR WITH US ON DEPARTURE TIMES AND BE SURE TO CHECK THE BULLETIN BOARD DAILY FOR ANY CHANGES.

We are working on the 1995 "Return to Italy" so be thinking of that. There will be some changes in the itinerary from the 1993 trip. If you are interested in getting the brochure, please just write "Italy" anywhere in the margin of your registration form. We are not sending the Italy brochure to the entire mailing list so **EVEN IF YOU ARE NOT ATTENDING THE REUNION** and are interested in the Italy trip, write "Italy" on the registration form and return it to MariMac.

As you register, with your confirmation we will send a small map of the area in case you are driving or renting a car.

WE LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING YOU IN HAMPTON, WHOSE MOTTO IS "FROM THE SEA TO THE STARS."

THE REUNION RECAP

The 766th Squadron is responsible for writing up the proceedings of the Hampton Reunion. Contact your Squadron Director Robert V. Hayes and offer your services to write A summary of one or more of the events on the schedule. (See page 20).

MISSIONS

Editor's note: Due to an oversight, the latter portion of the description of Mission #45 was omitted from page 24 of the December 1993 issue of the "Liberaider". Here is the "wrist slapping" the Group got for the errors made on this mission.

Mission #45 (Continued) 13 June 1944

Target: Porto Marghera Aluminum Plant and Storage Facility, Italy

After the crews returned from the mission the explaining began. The Air Force was incensed because the Group had abandoned the primary target. The Wing was excited because of the large number of abortions. When the completed mission report showed that the aluminum plant had been hit instead of the oil installations, the Air Force refused to score the mission.

The finale to this mission was the disclosure of the fact by reconnaissance photography that much of the aluminum plant had been destroyed.

Mission #46 14 June 1944

Target: Szony Oil Storage, Hungary

The Air Force was still slaving away at German oil. The Group bombardiers were still hot. With CAVU weather, no enemy fighters, and only slight flak the 461st got 39 percent of its bombs within 1,000 feet of the center of impact on the oil storage installations at Szony, Hungary.

COMMENDATION

"From: Lee CO 49th Bomb Wing (H) APO 520

"To: Commanding Officer, 451st, 461st, 484th Bomb Groups APO 520

"The following teletype is quoted for your information. The message from the Commander In Chief Mediterranean Allied Air Force quoted below is forwarded to all units with great pride in the accomplishments of the Fifteenth Air Force. "The improvement in our bombing accuracy is a splendid tribute to

all commanders and organizations for their untiring efforts, willing cooperation, and unselfish devotion to duty. However, we must never relax in our efforts to further improve the training technique and employment of our weapon to insure ever increasing destruction of our enemy. I have just studied carefully the strike photographs of your valuable targets for the last two days. The accuracy of your bombing is tremendously impressive. It appears to me that your Air Force has never done two better days work. It is also quite evident that the Fifteenth Air Force can now be looked upon as a thoroughly trained and efficient heavy bomber organization with no superiors anywhere.

"I wish you would express to your Wing and Group Commanders and their combat crews my great pride in their accomplishments and my recognition of their operational efficiency in their high standards of bombing accuracy.

"For your information I have just passed the following message to General Spaatz: A careful study of the strikes and photographs of the targets of the Fifteenth Air Force for the past few days indicates clearly superior performance on both days. I do not believe this Air Force has ever done two better days work. I have not seen more accurate bombing of small points anywhere, anytime. In particular the oil refineries attacked yesterday were, in my opinion, completely destroyed or rendered entirely unserviceable for a long period. I have commended the Fifteenth Air Force. There is good evidence that the Fifteenth Air Force is now a veteran organization with very high standards of bombing accuracy and operational efficiency."

Mission #47

17 June 1944

Oradea M/Y, Roumania
Cancelled

Mission #47

18 June 1944

Giurgiu Oil Storage, Roumania
Cancelled

Mission #47

19 June 1944

Avignon M/Y, France
Cancelled

(Continued on page 24)

(Continued from page 23)

Mission #47

21 June 1944

City of Breslau, Germany

Cancelled

Mission #47

22 June 1944

Target: Trieste Oil Storage, Italy

Both the oil targets and the bad weather of the past several days were continued. The Assistant Group Operations Officer, Major Work, who had just been promoted, was unable to lead the Group to the oil storage installations at Trieste, Italy because of the bad weather. Turned back from the primary target, the Group circled Lake Venezia but were unable to pick up a target either at Mestre or at Porto Marghera. A few of the bombers jettisoned their load in the Adriatic, but most of them returned their bombs to base.

Mission #48

23 June 1944

Target: Giurgiu Oil Storage, Roumania

This was the second mission of the month to the oil storage area at Giurgiu, Roumania. On the first mission the Group had used 250 pound general purpose bombs. This time, with the intention of reaching underground installations, the Group used 1,000 pound general purpose bombs. The flak at the target, which was extremely intense and accurate, damaged twenty-nine of our planes but none were lost. Two men were injured. Fifteen enemy aircraft were seen, but there were no encounters. Lt. Colonel Hawes, Lt. Veiluva, Captain Lefler, Captain Pruitt, and Lt. Rhodes led the Group on the most successful mission it ever had. Sixty-eight percent of the big bombs were dropped within 1,000 feet of the center of impact.

Mission #49

25 June 1944

Target: Avignon M/Y, France

As a diversion from the oil installation targets, the Group was assigned on this mission to attack the East Marshalling Yard at Avignon, France. Good

weather, no fighters, no flak. Major Burke, who led the formation, dropped a little from his previous dizzy heights of successful missions with a score of 26 percent of the bombs on the target.

Mission #50

26 June 1944

Target: Korneuburg Refineries, Austria

For its fiftieth mission the Group was back again to an oil target. The target, a concentrated one, was a refinery in the open country near the small town of Korneuburg in Austria. Lt. Colonel Knapp led the formation. The pilot of the lead plane was a new one in the number 1 position of "A" Flight of the first attack unit, Lt. Alkire. The target was obscured by smoke from explosions and fires caused by the bombing of the two other Groups in the Wing. Some of the bombs hit in the smoke, but most of them were scattered outside the target area.

The plane piloted by Lt. Zive left the formation at the initial point and disappeared.

COMMENDATION

"From: Lee CO 49th Bomb Wing (H)

"To: Commanding Officer—451st, 461st, 484th Bomb Groups, APO 520

"The following message received from General Spaatz will be brought to the attention of all members of your command: 'I wish to congratulate you, your commanders, the combat crews, ground personnel of the Fifteenth Air Force for your splendid performance in yesterday's attack against the Vienna oil installations. You have dealt the enemy another hard blow. The aggressive and persistent attacks being made by the Fifteenth Air Force against the enemy's most critical targets are most gratifying.'"

Mission #51

28 June 1944

Target: City of Bucharest on Pathfinder, Roumania

With the intentions of cutting the railroad lines connecting Bucharest and Ploesti, the Air Force again assigned the Chitila Marshalling Yard at Bucharest to

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(Continued from page 24)

the Group as a target. As has been the case on many of the missions which Colonel Glantzberg had led, poor weather hindered the success of the mission. A great deal of bad weather was experienced en route to the target area. The weather cleared at the target, but there was an intense haze. Instead of bombing the marshalling yards visually, the Group bombed the City of Bucharest by pathfinder. Although there was a great deal of flak in the target area, the Group escaped without much damage. One man was injured, and three airplanes were damaged. Twenty-four enemy aircraft were seen and several were encountered. One of those was destroyed and two were listed as probables. Colonel Glantzberg, back from England, led the formation. Bucharest traditions prevailed: bad weather, plenty of heavy but accurate flak, and not especially good bombing.

Mission #52
30 June 1944

Target: Blechhammer South Synthetic Oil Plant, Germany

On the last day of the month the Group was still hammering away at enemy oil installations. This time the target was one of the two synthetic rubber and oil plants at Blachhammer, Germany. In this target area there are two large establishments known as Blachhammer South and Blechhammer North. These plants which are located in open country approximately two miles apart are rectangular in shape. They are approximately 3,000 by 5,000 feet in size. They have a combined output capacity of 500,000 tons a year.

Our target was the South Plant. Colonel Glantzberg, leading the Group ran into his usual bad weather. Added to an almost complete undercast were the defenses of the target which consisted of intense heavy flak and effective smoke screens. The bombing was done visually with unobserved results.

Mission #53
1 July 1944

Target: Munich Neuibiberg A/D Installations, Austria

Cancelled

Mission #53
2 July 1944

Target: Budapest Rakos M/Y, Hungary

The change in the old order of things began with the very first mission in July. The target was the Rakos Marshalling Yard in Budapest, Hungary. Although the Group had not bombed in Budapest since the 13th of April, crewmembers remember well that city as a hot target. On the occasion of this mission there was plenty of flak but not too much of it was within range of the Group. Flying as the last Group in the Win formation, the bombardiers dropped their bombs on the marshalling yard through the smoke started by the other groups. For the first time in its history the Group suffered the deep humiliation of having the Air Force score the efforts of the Group at zero. Captain Leffler, Group Bombardier, talked long and loud in an effort to have the Air Force change the rating to "no score", but to no avail.

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FROM THE HISTORY OF THE 461ST BOMB GROUP (H)

Chapter X. The Old Order Changeth, July 1944

(A) Narrative History

In the month of July the 461st Bombardment Group ran the gamut of human experiences. The most violent of the emotions created were those of grief, chagrin, surprise, frustration, and disappointment which immediately followed the losses of forty officers and men and four airplanes at Nimes, France, on the 12th of July and one hundred thirteen officers and men and fifteen planes at Linz, Austria, on the 25th of the

month—all to fighters.

For the ninety seven officers and men who returned to the United States on a rotation basis there was joy. For the many officers and men who successfully completed fifty combat sorties there was deep satisfaction. For the members of the new crews coming into the Group there were high hopes and ambitions.

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For all members of the command there was a pride in the accomplishments of the Group, the commendations received by the Group, and the praise bestowed upon the Group by the Commanding General of the Fifteenth Air Force, Major General Nathan F. Twinning. For the Commanding Officer and both his Senior and his Command Staffs there were anxieties, fears, hopes, bewilderment and almost despair. The many difficulties experienced by the Group during the month of July stemmed directly from the failure of some higher echelon to feed replacement crews into the Group during the months of May and June. As a result, instead of gradual transition there was a sudden and almost complete but costly change of flying personnel.

On the first day of the month Lt. Colonel Hawes, Lt. Colonel Grogan, who had been traveling on special orders, returned from a five day trip to Rome. They were the first officers from this Group to visit Rome on this basis. Following their return a schedule was worked out under which a different detail of officers and men from the Group visited Rome each week on special orders.

Lt. Colonel Hawes and Lt. Colonel Grogan celebrated the Fourth of July by flying a special United States flag over Group Headquarters for the day. The flag, which was pure silk, had been sent to Lt. Colonel Hawes by his wife. It had previously been given to her by her father, the late Mr. Jacob W. Hermes of Nanuet, New York, who had been a silk importer. The flag was originally a gift to him from a silk manufacturing company in Japan with whom he had done business before the outbreak of the war.

On the 10th of July, forty two officers and fifty four enlisted men, with Captain Marion C. Mixson in command, left the base to go by truck to Naples from where they were to return to the United States. A few of these individuals were supposedly being sent home permanently from this theatre of operations, but most of the officers and men were actual or potential staff personnel or flight leaders. A few days after they had left the base, Major James C. Dooley, the 766th Squadron Commander, joined the detail at Naples for the return trip to the United States. After the detail had left the Group the Air Force reversed its decision concerning its rotation policy. Once again combat crewmembers knew they would be going home for

reassignment upon completion of fifty sorties. With the reversed decision of the Air Force was another stipulation that only staff personnel now on rotation to the United States could be returned to the Group and that such personnel must be requested by 31 July 1944. Thus, the Group definitely lost the future services of twenty-five officers and forty-three men, and possibly the services of eighteen staff officers and nine men whose return was requested.

With the departure of Major Dooley on 17 July 1944 several changes in personnel took place. Major Burke, who for the past eleven months had done an outstanding job as the original Operations Officer of the Group, replaced Major Dooley as Squadron Commander in the 766th. This was considered both a pleasant change and an opportunity for the aggressive, resourceful little Major to get some command experience. Major Harrison G. Word, who had been Major Burke's Assistant Operations Officer, became the Operations Officer. Captain Joseph N. Donovan, the Assistant Operations Officer of the 766th Squadron, was transferred to Group to be Major Word's Assistant. When Major Burke, leading the Group for the first time as a Squadron Commander, was shot down on the disastrous mission to Linz on 25 July 1944, Major Word succeeded him again, this time as the 766th Squadron Commander. Captain Donovan became the Group Operations Officer and Captain James B. Robinson, Jr. as his assistant. The Group was feeling the loss of its officers who were home on rotation. Colonel Glantzberg was glad that higher echelons had approved his recommendation that Lt. Colonel Hawes be sent home on rotation.

Several other changes in and additions to the Group personnel were made during July. On the 3rd of July, paragraph 5 and 6 of the Group's Special Orders No. 54 placed the following radar navigator operators, "mickey operators", on detached service with organizations of the 461st Group: 2nd Lt. Leonard C. Gizelba, 0692390; 2nd Lt. Arthur J. Marangelo, 0692045; and 2nd Lt. John W. Carroll, 0707011. Paragraph 3 of Special Orders No. 55, dated 6 July 1944, added F/O John N. Panagiotopoulos, T-123298, to the Group as another radar navigator operator. Two more "mickey operators", 1st Lt. Eltinge H. Read and F/O Edward R. Carey, were added to the Group on July 29th by paragraph 5 of Group Special Orders No. 72.

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Paragraph 15 of the Group Special Orders No. 60, dated 15 July 1944, read as follows: "Having been asgd to this Gp pursuant to Par 4, SO 93, Hq 49th Bomb Wg, dtd 15 July 1944, CPL DYNES, CHARLES E., 37326291, is further asgd to Hq 461st Bomb Gp." Having formerly had extensive newspaper experience in civilian life, Corporal Dybes was immediately made the chief non-com of the Public Relations Department of the Combat Intelligence Section.

Paragraph 3 of Group Special Orders No. 63, dated 18 July 1944, read as follows: "Having been asgd to this Gp per Par 1, SO 94, Hq 49th Bomb Wg, dtd 16 July 44, 1st Lt. (0141) RAYMOND, EUGENE B., 0854519, is further asgd to Hq 461st Bomb Gp, and is hereby designated Group Radar Officer.

On July 26th, Captain William F. Foster became the second combat intelligence officer to be lost to the Group. Authority: Group Special Orders No. 70, dated 26 July 1944, Paragraph 7: "Pursuant to Par 6, SO 200, Hq 26th Genl Hosp, APO 363, US Army, dtd 22 Jul 44, CAPT FOSTER, WILLIAM F., 0301540, is reld fr asgd to the 765th Bomb Sq, the Gp, and is trfd to Det Pnts, 26th Genl Hosp."

On July 27th 2nd Lt. Robert E. Evans III, who had completed fifty sorties with the Group as a co-pilot and first pilot, was transferred at his own request to the 14th Fighter Group. He was the first pilot in this Group ever to be granted a request for a second tour of duty in this theatre of operations. Authority: Group Special Orders No. 71, paragraph 3, dated 27 July 1944.

On July 30th, Major General Nathan F. Twining, Commanding General of the Fifteenth Air Force, came to Group Headquarters to decorate the Wing Commander, Colonel William L. Lee, with the Distinguished Flying Cross as a reward to the Colonel for the Ploesti mission of 15 July. Several members of the 461st Group were also decorated by the General. One of them was 1st Lt. Leonard P. Cash, who received the Silver Star for repeatedly escorting crippled planes home from combat missions.

Following the presentation of the award, the General addressed Colonel Lee, Colonel Glantzberg, and the formation. Speaking in a crisp but friendly manner and using short sentences, the General expressed

pride in and satisfaction with the 49th Wing and the 461st Group. He said again that the Group was one of the very best in the Air Force and that the spirit and morale of the outfit was a matter of common knowledge and favorable comment at Headquarters of the Fifteenth Air Force. He closed his remarks by saying he had always been confident about the ability of this Group to carry out its assignments in a superior manner.

(B) Operations

During the month of July the Group flew a total of twenty-one combat missions. The average number of planes air-borne per mission was thirty. Of the 630 planes which were air-borne, 68 returned early. Crew members accumulated a total of 4447 combat hours, a total of 1175 of the 1469 tons of bombs that were carried by air-borne planes were dropped on briefed targets. In destroying 43, probably destroying 23 and damaging 9 enemy airplanes, the Group inflicted more losses upon the enemy than in any other previous month. The losses to the Group, on the other hand, were also heavier than for any other previous month. These losses total 24 planes, two individuals killed, 194 missing in action and 28 injured.

With one mission to Czechoslovakia and one to Greece during the month, the Group brought to nine the total number of countries in Europe in which it had bombed. The targets ranged all the way from the most difficult to "freshman missions" as easy as those first flown by the Group in early April. On the whole, however, the targets were consistently the roughest ever flown by this Group. Never before had the Group been called upon to fly fifteen consecutive missions as difficult as those flown by the Group during the twenty day period from the 2nd to the 22nd day of July. Of the six missions flown after the 22nd of the month, three were extremely rough.

The bombing average of the Group for the months of April, May and June had been the highest in the Air Force for the three month's period. With an average of 32 percent, the Group was 3 percent higher than its nearest rival, the 97th Group, which had an average score of 29 percent. During the month of June, the 461st Group with a bombing average of 38.8 percent had ranked fourth in the Air Force. In dropping 1 percent in July from its June average, the Group dropped from fourth to sixth position in the Air Force.

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Mission #54
3 July 1944

Target: Bucharest Mogasaia Oil Storage, Roumania

Bad weather continued to dog the 461st Group in its effort to find a clear day at Bucharest. The target for the day was the Mogasaia Oil Storage near the central part of the city. When the Group, led by Lt. Colonel Hawes, arrived at the target, it was partially obscured by cloud coverage. Some of the planes in the formation dropped their bombs with fair results. On the way to the primary target the route had been close to the alternate target, the Iron Gate on the Roumanian side of the Danube River. As the formation passed over this target it was noted to be opened. As a result, some of the bombardiers did not drop at Bucharest but returned to drop at the Iron Gate. F/O Mac L. Lucas, after fighting mechanical failures of his plane all the way across Yugoslavia on the return route from the target, was finally forced to bail out his crew near the Adriatic Coast.

Mission #55

5 July 1944

Target Beziers M/Y, France

The third target of the month was located in the third country in which the Group had bombed during the month of July. The target was the large marshalling yard at Beziers, France. The purpose of hitting this target was that of hampering the movement of two German divisions from southwest France to the fighting front in Normandy.

Photographs of this mission are most interesting. The 451st Group, which led the Wing, dropped its bombs diagonally across the target. The pictures of the 484th Group, which was second in the Wing formation, are almost identical with those of the 451st, showing that the second Group dropped practically all their bombs into the smoke started by the 451st. Pictures of the 461st, which was the last Group over the target, are practically identical with those of the 484th. Groups of the 49th Wing probably saturated this target with a higher concentration of bombs than they had done on any previous target. Later reports showed that a great deal of damage had been done.

This mission was scored 45 percent.

On this mission S/Sgt. Lawrence B. Custer of Lima, Ohio, the tail gunner on Lt. Aldredge's crew, became the first member of this Group to complete fifty missions.

COMMENDATION

“From: Lee CO, 49th Bomb Wing (H), APO 520

“To: Commanding Officer, 451st, 461st, 484th Bomb Group, APO 520, US Army

“The following teletype is quoted for your information, FAF ASLE 72 Confidential” ‘Your entire command is commended for the highly successful attack on German troop trains in the marshalling yards at Beziers, this is one bunch of Huns that won't reach the beachhead.’”

Mission #56
6 July 1944

Target: Aviano Oil Storage, Italy

The target for Mission #56, which was approximately 600 feet square, was probably the smallest target ever assigned to this Group. It was an oil storage plant in open country near an airdrome at the town of Aviano, Italy. Major Burke continued to be the fair-haired Group leader when a score of 48 percent was recorded for this mission. Then 1st Lt. Ausbon E. Aldredge of Alexandria, Louisiana, set his plane down on the runway on returning from this mission, he became the first pilot and the first officer in the Group to complete fifty missions. Another of his enlisted men, S/Sgt. Maywood Carpenter from Summerville, Ohio, also completed his fifty sorties with Lt. Aldredge. Wing Commander William L. Lee rode as an observer on this mission.

Mission #57
7 July 1944

Target: Blachhammer North Synthetic Plant, Germany

Back again to Blachhammer, Germany; this time to the North Plant. Again Colonel Glantzberg led, again the weather was bad, again smoke pots and the anti-aircraft were at work. The bombs were dropped

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by pathfinder. Although the photographs are poor, not much damage is believe to have been done to the target. Thirty-two enemy planes were seen, five were destroyed and four probably destroyed. A total of twenty-one of our bombers were damaged on this mission.

Mission #58
8 July 1944

Target: Korneuburg Oil Refinery, Austria

On July 8th Lt. Colonel Hawes came through with a great mission to the Korneuburg Oil Refinery, Austria. Fifty-two percent of the bombs were dropped within 1,000 feet of the center of impact. The weather was excellent, but there were enemy airplanes encounters and plenty of damage by flak. The 49th Wing formation on this mission was exceptionally good.

Mission #59
11 July 1944

Target: Submarines at Toulon, France

Lt. Colonel Applegate led the Group in an attack on submarines stationed in the harbor of Toulon. The weather was excellent and the Germans were slow in starting their smoke pots. The flak was only moderate in intensity. For some reason, however, most of the bombs overshot the target to the right with only fair results.

Mission #60
12 July 1944

Target: Nimes M/Y, France

By the 12th of the month several of the crews had completed their fifty sorties. Upward of 100 combat crewmembers had been sent back to the United States on a rotation basis. Other crews were at rest camps. The number of crews available, consequently, was limited. For this mission it was decided to fly a formation of four flights instead of the customary six flights.

For the first time in its history the 461st Group was

really hit on the bomb run by a formation-concentration of enemy fighters. Twenty-eight enemy fighters hit the last flight of six planes and knocked down four of them. Three of the planes went down over the target at Nimes, France, and the fourth apparently failed in an effort to ditch within the sight of Toulon. The planes lost over the target were those piloted by 1st Lt. Richard S. Fawcett, 2nd Lt. Frederick L. Dunn, and 2nd Lt. Chester A. Ray, Jr. Lt. Fawcett's plane was in bad shape when last seen. From all three planes, nevertheless, chutes were seen to open. 2nd Lt. William J. Barnes, the youngest officer in the Group, was pilot of the plane which attempted to ditch in the Gulf of Lion.

The fighter attach split up the bomb run with the result that the mission was scored only 24 percent on the big marshalling yard. Seven enemy planes were shot down. It was apparent to all that evil days had at last caught up with the hitherto invincible 461st.

Mission #61
14 July 1944

Target: Petfurdo Oil Refinery, Hungary

Although Major Dooley flew the day following this mission, this mission was the last one which he led the Group before going home on rotation. His swan song as a Group leader netted him and the Group the highest score thus far ever obtained by the Group when 82 percent of the bombs were dropped within 1000 feet of the center of impact on the Petfurdo Oil Refinery near Budapest in Hungary. The weather was CAVU, only two enemy airplanes were seen, and only slight flak was experienced at the target.



From Air Force Gunners Association

ANGELS UNKNOWN

by
John Bybee

**Continued from page 32 of the December 1993
issue of the "Liberaider"**

Seventeen minutes after entering enemy air space the 461st, now slightly north of Drvar, Yugoslavia, was overflowed by a group of 14th Fighter Group P-38s. Bob had brought along a package of cheese and crackers which his wife, Marion, had sent him. Homer said to Bob, "Let's break into those cheese and crackers." Bob replied, "No, let's save them for a snack on the way back."

At 10:35 a.m. the 461st, now almost three-fourths of the way across Yugoslavia, spotted P-38s near Sisak.

Near Prelog, Yugoslavia, at the southwest corner of the Yugoslavia/Hungary border, the mile wide, five mile long bomber stream turned northeast. The formation droned across Hungary and set for another course change near Bratislava, Czechoslovakia.

The Germans had not been fooled by the fancy navigation. Long range Würzburg and Freya radars based in Rumania had picked up the bombers while they were assembling over Italy, and tracked them across Yugoslavia.

Teleprinters clattered and telephones rang in the command centers of the 8th Jagdivision and the 4th Flakbrigade. Ranges, bearings and expected targets of the bombers were radioed to the waves of FW-190s, ME-109s, 110s, 210s, and JU-88s raising to intercept the intruders. Shorter ranged (24 miles) Würzburg radars located southeast of Bratislava relayed the altitude of the bombers to Grossbitterien where 37, 88, and 105 mm guns were positioned in the corridor between Vienna and Budapest.

Grim black puffs of flak exploded amid the 764th's formation. Bob Trumpy recalled the B-24 to the right of his ship taking a direct hit from flak. "There was just a big orange flash and black smoke, and that was the end of that airplane."

Ken was assigned to the worst spot in the formation, tail-end charlie. Turbulence, wide wakes of prop-wash and narrow cones of wing tip vortexes corkscrewing back from the six B-24s ahead made Ten Men Bak bounce, flop and bob like a cork on a stormy sea. Ken persistently kicked his rudders left and right, sideslipping to remain behind his squadron. At the same time, he constantly adjusted his throttles to chase the formation.

Ken was at 22,000 feet and about twenty miles east of Bratislava, Czechoslovakia when the number three turbo-charger failed. Ken peered over his oxygen mask at the tachometer and cylinder head temperature gauges for number three. Head temperature was raising, RPMs falling off. Ice in the air intake duct between the turbo-supercharger and the carburetor? Unlikely; the intercooler shutters were closed. Super-charger regulator failure? Possible. The altimeter needle began to unwind. Ken, a former aircraft engineer for Allison in Indianapolis, shoved the throttles of his three good engines to war emergency power and slammed the propeller controls to full flat pitch. Number three engine fell off to one-third power. Ken ordered Homer forward.

"... Homer was always studying the plane and its equipment. He was serious about his job, and we always felt confident that Homer would bring us home." Ken recalled proudly.

The 24-year-old flight engineer squeezed past the stubby 500 pound bombs and walked the narrow catwalk from the waist to the flight deck.

Homer labored with the various settings of throttle, mixture, and propeller to coax more power from the ailing engine.

Bob said in a choked voice, "Homer, the flight engineer, I thought was unusually talented. I felt if anything was wrong—Homer could fix it. Didn't turn out that way, but it wasn't anyone's fault, it just happened."

The number two engine on the left wing began to grumble and run rough. At 11:17 a.m. Ken radioed Captain Mixson, and told him, "One turbo out and one rough engine, fuel low." Ken also asked for permission to abort. Permission to abort was denied and Ken was told to remain in formation if at all possible.

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Ken defiantly gripped the control wheel and fought the controls to hold his right wing tip about a foot away from the left vertical stabilizer of his wing man. Later, he would tell Bob, "I wish I could have had you up there in the co-pilot's seat adding some muscle and power on those rudders and stick."

By 11:23 a.m., the squadron had pulled away from a lagging Ten Men Bak. Without further radio contact with the lead ship, Ken dropped out of the formation. Fuel was too low to permit their return to Italy. Ken asked Frank Hokr for an east heading towards the Russian lines.

Flak batteries zeroed in on the descending B-24. Flak bursts tore out chunks of the right wing flap and put holes in the left wing.

Alone and cut off Ten Men Bak limped out of the range of the guns. In scant minutes the dreaded cry of "enemy fighters!" resounded in Ken's earphones.

Frank Hokr looked out his bubble window and saw a mixed gaggle of FW-190s and ME-109s closing head-on in line abreast.

At 11:40 a.m., 1st Lt. Clark C. Barritt his own B-24 under attack by fighters, noted the predicament of Ken's hapless number 12. "I noticed a plane from the 461st Group at 5 o'clock low from our plane. The plane was being attacked by two or three German fighters which I believe were FW-190s."

A group of FW-190s angled down and attacked Ten Men Bak from the rear. The lead FW-190 opened fired at about 600 yards. Solid cannon hits smashed into the middle of the Liberator's fuselage. Bud Granger returned the fire. The FW-190 bored in, concentrating his fire on the tail turret. Cannon salvos blew Bud's turret from its tracks. Additional shells knocked Roland's ball turret out of commission. Unharmed, Bud escaped into the open fuselage behind him.

Roland Warren, a plucky former shoe salesman from West Warwick, Rhode Island, told bombardier Harry Edminston he would fire a waist gun instead. Back to back with Charlie Foss at the right waist gun, Roland called out the positions of the attacking fighters. Roland swung his 65 pound .50 caliber machine gun on its pivot and snapped out short bursts at the enemy

fighters arching in on their second pass.

Tracers reached for the B-24; when they touched, the FW-190 pilot pulled the trigger of his cannons. Hits lacerated the waist of the B-24, several of the 20 mm rounds hit Roland Morin in the chest. Bud rushed to Roland's side and administered first aid, but the wounds were mortal. Roland died in Bud's arms. Eighteen year old Charlie Foss, at the right waist gun went down; his right arm shattered by a storm of bullets.

The FW-190s, MR-109s and ME-210s continued their attack from above and both sides. Bob Trumpy in the top turret followed one FW-190 around from the tail to the right wing tip. The FW-190 tipped up and exposed his belly to the twin streams of lead pouring from Trumpy's guns. Black smoke and glycol erupted from the light blue FW-190. Ken saw the canopy come off and a second later the German pilot bailed out.

Another FW-190 charged in from 5 o'clock low and unleashed a barrage of bullets that slashed through Chet Rudel's window. The deadly stream of lead sprayed across the instrument panel—flight devices and engine gauges disappeared in a flurry of broken glass.

Ken Smith recalled, "The hail of bullets came slowly across and one severed my oxygen hose—the next one would have killed me, but it never came."

A 20 mm shell exploded in an orange flash behind the number two engine and ignited an inferno. The intercom was dead. Bob Trumpy jumped up from his turret and tapped Ken on the shoulder and exclaimed, "We are on fire behind number two!" Ken shut down the engine and feathered the propeller while Bob returned to his turret. The malicious fire burned steadily towards the main port wing tank. The unmanageable number three engine conked out. Ken feathered a second propeller.

Ken recalled, "I remember seeing a FW-190 off my left wing tip up in a high speed stall five feet in front of my left wing tip. He was looking at me and I was looking at him, and wishing to God I could reach inside my Mae West and get my .45 because I could have hit him."

Bob Trumpy jumped from his waist turret and yelled at Ken, "We're really on fire—we've got to get out of here!"

Ken related, "I could see our wing tip getting higher

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and higher on the left side. I jettisoned out bomb load of 500 pounders to give us more speed, but realized the fire was going to take us down.” Ken motioned to Bob and Homer to bail out, and sounded the evacuation alarm. At 15,000 feet Bud plunged out the tail floor hatch. Charlie Foss, his right arm useless, opened his chute inside the plane and followed Bud.

The hydraulic system was out by the time Bob and Homer made their way to the bomb bay; the doors would not open. Homer leaped onto the catwalk and midway across he seized the manual bomb bay door crank, no response—the doors were jammed. Bob, a former Illinois State football player, put his size to good use—he jumped up and down on the doors. Finally Bob’s jumping cleared the jam and Homer was able to crank open the doors. Homer, Bob and Chet bailed out of the flaming B-24.

In the nose, Harry, Frank and Ed discovered that the nose wheel doors were immobilized. The three men crawled underneath the flight deck, hurried across the catwalk and went out through the bomb bay.

Ken was now alone on the dying Liberator. He locked on the auto-pilot and headed for the bomb bay. He was trapped. The catwalk between the front and rear bomb bay had collapsed. A mass of twisted debris blocked his escape. Ken returned to the flight deck without any hope of regaining aerodynamic control of #12. Moments later the left wing folded up like a dead butterfly’s wing and ripped away. The B-24 left the sunlight and rolled into its death dive.

“They said you could never bail out of a B-24 from the flight deck. The plane rolled to the left and I fell through the pilot’s escape hatch and was free of the aircraft. I hit the silk just five hundred feet off the ground.”

Nine men floated down through the clouds towards an uncertain landing near Trencin, Czechoslovakia. Chet Rudel’s chute tangled in tree branches and left him suspended with his toes just touching a limb. Chet released his harness and fell 20 odd feet to the ground. His back was broken by the impact, and he was to spend the rest of his life in a wheelchair. Bob Trumpy shattered his left ankle on landing.

By 4:00 p.m. all of the crew had been captured except for Ed Burkhardt who escaped capture and spent the rest of the war with the local underground.

After their liberation from POW camps and German hospitals the nine members of crew 6757 assembled at Camp Lucky Strike, Le Havre, France for transport back to the States. Their war was over, the nine men went their separate ways. It would be December 14, 1984 before 6757 came together as a family.

“It is difficult for anyone to really know and understand how close we were ... and still are,” Ken remarked with deep emotion. “Roland Morin, Ed Chojnowski, Harry Edminston, and Homer Hymbaugh are gone. But we are still a family and plan to get together as often as practical. We trained together, lived together, and fought together. No one ever had a better crew than I did. Knowing them made the war worth fighting.”

Throughout his life, Ken Smith has redefined his goals, but not his values. Since that fateful December morning when he and the other nine members of his Air Corps family took off in a bomber named “Ten Men Bak” the crew has remained nameless Americans. The steel of their morals and wills forged in the Great Depression—and tempered by the orange, aviation gas flames mirrored in the disintegrating silver wings of their hapless B-24.

I NEED YOUR HELP!

The “Liberator” is your newsletter. As you can see in this issue, most of the material is written by you the members of the 461st BG. Although I served my time in the nose section of a B-24, there is no way I can fill these pages with my experiences alone. It makes me feel good to get your notes and phone calls asking “where’s my Liberaider?” It tells me somebody’s reading it and anticipating the next issue. But, that next issue may not come if I don’t get your letters and articles. They are what makes the “Liberator” and are essential to its continuation. So, **PLEASE**, if you have an interesting experience to relate or can respond to a question I have asked please sit down and put it on paper. If you can’t write it dictate it to your wife, child or friend. I’m just about out of news so get busy! I need a lot of material to fill the December 1994 issue.

George Dickie, Editor

COLLINGS B-17 & B-24 GET THOROUGH REFURBISHING IN FLORIDA

New Smyrna Beach, Florida

The Collings Foundation's famous warbirds, B-24J "All American", and B-17G "Nine-O-Nine" have been at American Aero Services, in New Smyrna Beach, for some well deserved pampering and preening. Both of the aircraft underwent engine repairs and/or replacements, in addition to interior and exterior repairs to all control surfaces, flaps, and control cables. Both ships received new tires, brakes, wheel bearings, and window panels, along with the usual system overhauls which are part of their regular annual inspections.

Some unforeseen repairs involving both aircraft have delayed the start of the Florida tour. The B-24 required replacement of a number of the rivets which attach the metal skin panels to both wings. The problem was noticed when a small number of rivets on the trailing edges of the flaps started to pull through the metal surfaces. The problem will soon be fixed, however, many un-budgeted man-hours were required to replace the rivets.

The B-17 also experienced problems when x-rays revealed small cracks in the top-rear wing spars in both wings. This required complete re-fabrication of two new spar sections. Since there is no such thing as "spare" spars, the aluminum spar material had to be custom made at great expense. Hundreds of man-hours have been spent in disassembling and preparing the wing to accept the new spar section, and as of 1-16-94, the starboard side had been completed, and the port wing will be done soon. As soon as all wing repairs are completed, engine testing will begin.

Every major flight-critical system on both aircraft will have been inspected and found to be in operating condition before either aircraft can be signed-off for flight tests. Since both aircraft are too large to fit into the hanger, work has been hampered by unwanted outbursts from Mother Nature, including gusty winds, rain, and chilly weather, (although it's a heck of a lot warmer in Florida, than it is in the rest of the nation right now!!).

The good news is that these two beautiful warbirds will soon be ready to resume their mission to keep the history of WWII aviation alive. The bad news is that due to the major unplanned repairs, there are huge bills to be paid. Bob Collings, owner of the aircraft, had really taken a financial beating this year in order to keep these aircraft flying. The Collings Foundation is a non-profit entity which relies on donations to keep the aircraft in the air, and right now, your financial contributions are absolutely vital to help keep those props turning. If you can help out in any way, please contact the Collings Foundation at (508) 568-8924 or mail your fully tax deductible check to: The Collings Foundation, River Hill Farm, Stow, MA 01775. These old birds saved us many times, not it's time to help save them.

Ed Liebe
461st Bomb Group, 765th Squadron
Florida Coordinator for the
"All American" and the "Nine-O-Nine"

The current schedule of visits for the B-24 "All American" and the B-17 "nine-O-Nine" is as follows:

July 8-10	Arlington, WA—Barbara Lawrence (206) 771-2685	July 17-19	Yakima, WA—Steve Vingo (509) 453-3320
July 10-13	Bellingham, WA—Hank Reasoner (206) 595-2618	July 19-21	Spokane, WA—Scott Sanderson (509) 448-4709
July 13-15	Wenatchee, WA—Arnie Clark (509) 884-2494	August 5-7	Minneapolis, MN—C.A.F. Airshow
July 15-17	Portland, OR—Portland Rose Festival	August 13-14	Beaver Falls, PA—Beaver Falls Airshow

COMMUNIQUES FROM OTHER OUTFITS

PILOT CLASS 44-G, MARIANNA, FL **50th YEAR REUNION**

Aug. 4, 5, 6 1994 at Colorado Springs, CO. Contact: Lt. Col. Charles L. Brown, USAF Ret., 3018 Shady Knoll Lane, Bedford, TX 76021-4120 (817) 498-7334.

3rd ANNUAL GEORGE FIELD REUNION

Sept. 8, 9, 10, 1994

Attempting to locate military people or employees who served time at George Field, IL 1942-1945

Allie DeLorica, Pres.
George Field Association
P.O. Box 301
Lawrenceville, IL 62439-0301
(618) 943-2307

COMBAT AIR MUSEUM

Forbes Field, Topeka, Kansas
Planning Reunion for August 1995
Contact: Reunion Committee
P.O. Box 19142
Topeka, KS 66619-0142

CONFEDERATE AIR FORCE, INC.

September 2, 1994—Midland, Texas

Confederate Air Force dedication of the "Bush Mission" exhibit, CAF hanger. Exhibit will bring to life the mission in which former President George Bush was shot down. For more information please call CAF Headquarters (915) 563-1000.

October 8-9, 1994

The Confederate Air Force (CAF) will host AIRSHO 94 at Midland International Airport, between Midland and Odessa, Texas. AIRSHO 94 will feature the CAF World War II Airpower Demonstration, the "FINA" Pitts, Jim Franklin's Waco "MYSTERYSHIP", Kip Komidor in his Chipmunk and Les Shockley's "SHOCKWAVE", plus many, many more World War II warbirds and modern military aircraft on static display.

BREVARD AVIATION ASSOCIATION

Planning their Fifth Annual
"Plane Fun Day"
Saturday, October 1, 1994
Free Admission

For Information, contact:
R. W. Lasher
900 Airport Road, Box 8
Merritt Island, FL 32952
(407) 636-5346

DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS SOCIETY

If you received the DFC and are interested in being part of this new group.

Contact: Alexander D. Ciurczak
USAF Ret. DFC
34552 Camino Capistrano
Capistrano Beach, CA 92624-1232

INFORMATION NEEDED

Researcher seeks information on **Allied airmen** who bailed out over Axis-occupied Greece during World War II

Contact: Nikos Kouklelis
48 Karapanos St.
166 75 Glyfada, Greece

NEW ADDRESS

International B-24 Liberator Club
15817 Bernardo Center Drive
Suite 102, B1-24
San Diego, CA 92127-2322

MOVIE UPDATE

On page 20 of the December 1993 issue of the "Liberaider" there is an article on the special 3-D movie "The Guns of Ploesti". At the moment the production of this movie is on "hold". The production costs are estimated to be \$25 million. The producers are currently seeking funds.

Chaff

I Believe

I believe every person has been put on this earth for just one purpose—to serve his fellow men. It doesn't matter how he does this. He can build a bridge, paint a picture, invent a labor saving gadget or run a gas station. The point is, he should try to leave the Earth a better place than he found it. If he does, his life will have been worthwhile. If he doesn't do what he can, within his own limitations, he is destined to be unhappy.



Jimmy Doolittle

God put me on earth to accomplish a certain number of things. Right now I'm so far behind, I will never die.

Copied from the 99th BG newsletter



**Senior Citizens
Are the biggest
Carrier of Aids!**

* * * * *

**Hearing Aids
Seeing Aids
Chewing Aids
Band Aids
Roloids
Walking Aids
Medicaid
Gov't Aids**

**George Tall Tails Newsletter
Contributed by Jean Hughey**

Around The Corner

By Henson Towne

Around the corner I have a friend.
In this great city that has no end.
Yet days go by and weeks rush on,
And before I know the year is gone,
And I never see my old friend's face;
For life is a swift and terrible race.
He knows I like him just as well
As in the days when I rang his bell
And he rang mine. We were younger then -
And now we are busy, tired men -
Tired with playing a foolish game;
Tired with trying to make a name.
"Tomorrow," I say, "I will call on Jim,
"Just to show that I'm thinking of him."
But tomorrow come—yet miles away...
"Here's a telegram, sir."
"Jim died today."

And that's what we get—and deserve in the end -
Around the corner, a vanished friend.

Copied from the "Raven", newsletter of the
301st Veterans Association.

Editor's note: It's later than you think! Don't vacillate or hesitate. If you haven't done it lately, write, call or visit an old friend, crewmember or anyone in need of T.L.C. Everyone feels better and you'll never have to say, "I wish I'd gotten around to it."

Shoptalk

A group of Air Force pilots and their wives were having dinner, and for several hours the wives sat and listened to accounts of takeoffs, landings, near collisions and bad weather.

Exasperated, one of the wives finally demanded, "Don't you fellows get enough shoptalk when you're with the squadron?"

Don't be silly," snapped her husband. "When we're with the squadron we talk about women."

Gulf Coast Cattleman

Bumper sticker in Sandwich, MA

All men are idiots
And I married their king.

Chaff

My Get Up And Go

How do I know that my youth is all spent?
Well, my get up and go has got up and went.
But in spite of it all I am able to grin,
When I recall where my get up has been.

Old age is golden—so I've heard it said,
But sometimes I wonder when I get into bed,
With my ears in a drawer and my teeth in a cup,
My eyes on the table until I wake up.

Ere sleep dims my eyes I say to myself,
"Is there anything else I should lay on the shelf?"
And I'm happy to say as I close my door,
My friends are the same, perhaps even more.

When I was young, my slippers were red,
I could kick up my heels over my head.
When I grew older, my slippers were blue,
But still I could run the whole day through.

But now I am old, my slippers are black,
I walk to the store and puff my way back.
The reason I know my youth is all spent,
My get up and go got up and went.

But I really don't mind when I think, with a grin,
All the places my get up has been.
Since I have retired from life's competition,
I accommodate myself with complete repetition.

I get up each morning, and dust off my wits,
Pick up my paper and read the "obits",
If my name is missing, I know I'm not dead,
So I eat a good breakfast and go back to bed!

Author Unknown (Composite of many such expressions)
Copied from "Crosshairs" June 1994

GUESS WHO Courtesy of H. Basil Lewis, Jr.

An old man lives at our house now,
I don't know when he came.
I've even tried to run him off,
But he stays here just the same.



When I get up and wash my face,
And start to comb my hair,
He's always looking back at me,
And we just stand and stare.

His skinny arms and bony legs,
Leave much to be desired.
And when I think ambitious thoughts,
He always says, "I'm tired."

He tries to tell me what to eat,
And medicine to take;
And when I disregard his words,
I get the bellyache.

I don't know why he hangs around,
To make a fool of me.
I'm not attracted much to him,
But he's quite attached to me.

I thought I'd run him off one night,
My heart was full of glee.
And then, to my chagrin, I found
He'd come to bed with me.

Just when I'm filled with vigor,
Vitality and vim;
He balks, I really don't know how
My wife put up with him.

In every conversation now,
Whether he's far or near;
If someone's talking, he yells out,
Talk louder, I can't hear you.

I once could read the finest print,
And hunting was the rage,
That old man with his stares and squints,
Can't even find the page.

He wakes me up throughout the night,
We argue to and fro.
And when I say, "Go back to sleep",
He yells, "I gotta go."

He's what old men are when they get old,
That's what I've come to see.
There's one thing sure, I'm really glad
It's him instead of me.

From "Crosshairs" March 1944

Editor's note: Tom Yates, 766th B.S., sent me a copy of a 37 page document he wrote and copyrighted in 1991. Because of it's length and content I decided to just print some humorous excerpts of his experiences with the 461st B.G. The concept of writing down his thoughts and recollections of his military service for his family is worthy of comment and something we all should do.

HAD TO GO TO WAR

By

Thomas L. Yates

The other day I was watching an old movie about Mark Twain and I thought how nice it was for him to just sit and write about the things he knew and imagined. I then thought about my father who never wrote much except a memo about World War I during the time he was in France while fighting there. Although his writing wasn't the best it was quite legible. As all this went through my mind I wondered if my family and their families would have any interest in some of my activities and some random thoughts about the things I remember before and during my time in the United States Army Air Corps.

Our crew was #53 and consisted of the following men: Pilot, Lee P. Ward; Replacement Pilot, Michael K. LaRock; Co-Pilot, Grepory E. Mazza; Bombardier, Andrew E. McVicars; Navigator, George Wilson; Flight Engineer, Thomas L. Yates; Nose Gunner, William E. Glover; Ball Gunner, George Reaney; Tail Gunner, Melvin J. Moore; Radio Operator, Anthony J. Centanni; Waist Gunner, Mervin A. Dumdei.

I didn't want to be a mechanic. I didn't feel I had the talent for the job. I didn't try very hard for I didn't like what I was doing. After a break one day I noticed a bulletin stating if one failed this initial course he would be transferred to the infantry. Would you believe I finished second in my class for the entire course and was rewarded with a ride in Pistol Packing Mama, a celebrated B-24 which was brought back to the States to help with the war effort at home.

I learned I was to be the aerial engineer. I protested for I didn't feel I was qualified to be a flying mechanic. The protest was of no avail and I had to go through with it. I learned how to transfer gas, how to feather props, how to change out amplifiers and how to do many other necessary flight maintenance tasks, all in the classroom, but not in the air in actual flight. I went up once with a flight engineer and watched him, the next time he explained the things he was doing, and the third time he said, "It's all yours." At that time I hoped that my pilots had more training.

When we were ready to go overseas we flew our B-24's across the nation from west to east stopping in Arizona, Tennessee and New Hampshire. After a couple of days in New Hampshire we went over to Gander, Newfoundland. We were weathered in there for about a week. The weather let up a bit and early one August morning we took off from Newfoundland and headed for the Azores. It was beautiful for we were flying just above the clouds and when the sun came up it seemed to filter the rays of light through the peaks of the clouds. We were fortunate to have an excellent navigator for we hit the Azores head on. We stayed there over night and then we were off to Africa. We landed in Marrokech in one of the worst electrical storms I have even experienced. After that we went to Tunis and then we went to Bari, Italy. We left our plane there and were transported to Cerignola in another plane.

I remember my first mission. It was to bomb an airfield at Athens, Greece. It seemed that the Germans

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were trying to get their troops out of the area by tri-motor transports and we wanted to isolate them there. There was light anti-aircraft shells exploding around us and the fire in the middle of the shell was as big as a barn. It was frightening. The co-pilot who flew with us this day was an experienced combat pilot and he called back to the waist position to throw out chaff. Now chaff is like Christmas tinsel. This material fouls up the radar which guides the flak guns. Our crew was so green that they didn't know it had to be removed from the cardboard boxes and they dumped box and all. I don't believe that anyone knew about it except the Germans. At least they already had their Christmas tinsel a bit early.

We lost our first pilot, Lee Ward, when he was shot down over Trieste. He was flying with a "green" (new) crew on their first mission.

After the loss of Lt. Ward we were assigned a new pilot. He was Second Lieutenant Michael K. LaRock who had been a co-pilot on another crew. Mike was a nice appearing young man who had a certain air about him. He had great confidence in himself as a pilot and trusted others to know their jobs.

On Michael's first mission with us we drew a long mission to Poland. Planes are much like cars, in that some give good gas mileage and some get very poor mileage. We had a plane that drank more than the usual 200 gallons of gas an hour. On the way to the target I informed Lt. LaRock that we would not have enough gas to get back to our base. He informed me that this was his first mission as a first pilot and he was going there and back even if he had to get out and push. On the way back we lightened our ship of almost everything unessential and then through radio communication we found out there was an emergency landing strip on the island of Vis just off the coast of Yugoslavia. This landing strip was cratered in among some mountains and that caused updrafts which made landing difficult. Before landing Mike kept asking me if we could circle one more time. Since the gauges are tube type and fluctuated with the movement of the plane it is difficult to get an accurate reading, so I kept telling him it was a risk. When we finally landed I took a stick reading of the tanks from the top of the wings. I found that number three engine had about 30 gallons and the others varied from 5 to 20 gallons. It was nice to be down.

Many unusual things happened to the different crews of our squadron and to us. Once when the Operations Officer had to fly our crew and we were near Prague, the supercharger to one of the engines went out and the spare would not help. At this time we had to abort, and while returning we came close to a previous target that we were unable to bomb because of poor weather. We decided to give it a try but had no bomb-sight so the bombardier used the windshield wiper and we hit the target solid. That day we were one of the camera ships so Sgt. Dumdei filmed the hit. Because of the hit we got credit for the mission.

I believe the worst of the trips was the one to Munich in October of 1944. We were in the flight that was to hit the target and then rally right drawing the fire. The rest of the planes in the group rallied left and were a little more protected. As a result the #4 plane of our group, which is the center plane of the formation, caught a direct hit. When 2800 gallons of 100 octane gets a direct hit it is a tremendous burst of fire and parts of the plane and crew went in all directions. We were flying in #3 position, which is to the left and ahead of #4, and the power of the blast moved us ahead and outward. Planes in the #5, #6, and #7 positions were all damaged and were not able to get back over the Alps. We throttled back to lend protection for a while, but the planes just couldn't maintain altitude. Crews of those planes all bailed out into the Alps and we never did hear of their outcome.

I have to tell you about my tail gunner, he was from Greenville, Texas. He had pilot training, but washed

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out. He was a slender person about six feet tall with curly hair. He had a Texas Drawl and said that he did not believe in God. He always wanted to encounter enemy fighters and one day he got his chance. He shot down a German FW-190 and saw his shell kill the pilot. It made him realize that he didn't want to do any more killing. He never wanted to see another enemy aircraft. Melvin used to say that in the next war that there would be three in the tail for it would take two to hold him in there.

The war was fought by the youth. The oldest person on our crew was 28 year old George Reaney. You might have guessed that we called him "Pop". One of the best nose gunners was a youngster who turned 18 while flying his tour. The finest lead pilot was only 20 years old and I was told that his commanding officer had to send in a waiver on age so as to promote him to the rank of Captain.

Lt. Faulkner and his crew were shot down. This was a raid to Vienna and we weren't on this raid but later when they returned they told me of their experiences. They got hit coming off the target and the pilot kept the ship in the air with the use of trim tabs as the control cables were shot out. The engineer was able to get the crewmembers to get their chutes on and push them out of the bomb bay. He wasn't sure that all were conscious at the time. Some were hit pretty bad and the radio operator had died from severe head injuries. After all had bailed out the ship burst into flames. They were rescued by Mihilovich's Chitnicks.

There were also some Russians at a tavern where they stayed and these Russians kept taunting their group. After a while the co-pilot went over to one of the Russians and floored him with one punch. They said that after that there was no more trouble. Faulkner asked the Chitnicks to be turned over to a friendly group of Yugoslavians. Now this was a problem because the Yugoslavians and the Chitnicks were at war with one another but American money talks and the situation was soon straightened out. It took about a month or so for all this to take place and they came in the gate looking like hell. I thought surely they would be sent home but that crew didn't have much luck. They were patched up and sent back in the air to finish their missions. Remember the radio operator who was killed. Well, he was a pickup operator for their regular radio operator who refused to fly any more for he had had enough.

At Sheppard Field we had different days for different parts of our basic training. There was a master schedule for activities such as close order drill, physical education, aircraft recognition, etc. A friend of mine found out the schedule for the days of aircraft recognition. When these groups started for the theater we would sneak in their formation. It was a lot better in the theater than on the drill field. At Harlington Gunnery School we also had aircraft recognition. I made the highest grade of anyone who attended that program. Little did they know that I had more practice than most. Once we were coming off a target in Austria, my pilot wanted to know if any of us could see the escort. I swung my turret around and spotted the escort. I replied that they were at seven o'clock. A few moments later I heard my tail gunner blasting away and tracers were buzzing over my head. It seemed that the best student in aircraft recognition had mistaken German FW-190's for P-51's.

When the Winter Olympics were held in Sarejevo it reminded me of our many targets in Yugoslavia. Sarejevo was one of our targets along the Zagreb. Once while bombing Zagreb a shell hit so close to the plane that I felt the heat and thought the plane was on fire. I slid out of my top turret without releasing the seat and this can't be done. Anyway I looked around and found a hole about the size of a Texas Grapefruit. My waist gunner had been looking out the camera hatch and when he lifted his head his face was covered with soot. We were lucky that this shell burst downward and not upward.

More excerpts will appear in the next issue.

AMERICAN LOSSES AT PLOESTI

Low Level Raid August 1, 1943

53 bombers shot down with 530 men—130 taken prisoner

High Level Raids April 4, 1944 to August 19, 1944

314 bombers shot down 3140 men 1027 taken prisoner
111 fighters shot down 111 men 28 taken prisoner
 425 3251 1055

WHERE DID THE FIGHTERS AND BOMBERS COME FROM

8TH AIR FORCE ON LOW LEVEL RAID BASED IN ENGLAND
 (flying from the Libyan desert)

B-24 44th Bomb Group 51 POWs
 B-24 93rd Bomb Group 18 POWs
 B-24 389th Bomb Group 17 POWs
 B-24 98th Bomb Group Also on the high level raids
 B-24 376th Bomb Group Also on the high level raids

15th AIR FORCE ON HIGH LEVEL RAIDS BASED IN ITALY

310 B-17 BOMBERS

2nd Bomb Group 11 POWs
 97th Bomb Group 76 POWs
 99th Bomb Group 62 POWs
 301st Bomb Group 20 POWs
 463rd Bomb Group 85 POWs
 254 POWs

166 P-38 FIGHTER

1st Fighter Group 6 POWs
 14th Fighter Group 3 POWs
 82nd Fighter Group 8 POWs

P-47 FIGHTERS NOT KNOWN

166 P-51 FIGHTERS

31st Fighter Group 2 POWs
 52nd Fighter Group 5 POWs
 325th Fighter Group 4 POWs

930 B-24 BOMBERS

98th Bomb Group 59 POWs
 376th Bomb Group 84 POWs
 449th Bomb Group 97 POWs
 450th Bomb Group 133 POWs
 451st Bomb Group 62 POWs
 454th Bomb Group 26 POWs
 455th Bomb Group 68 POWs
 456th Bomb Group 26 POWs
 459th Bomb Group 67 POWs
 460th Bomb Group 25 POWs
 461st Bomb Group 31 POWs
 464th Bomb Group 44 POWs
 465th Bomb Group 26 POWs
 484th Bomb Group 17 POWs
 485th Bomb Group 8 POWs
 773 POWs

FINAL ANALYSIS OF LOSSES AT PLOESTI

367 bombers shot down with 3670 men
 111 fighters shot down with 111 men
 3781 men shot down
 Only 1185 survived and returned home

461st BOMB Group (H) 1943-1945, Inc.

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